

LETTERS

William Tulloch

FROM

A F A T H E R

TO

HIS SON,

A STUDENT OF DIVINITY.

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CONTENTS.

LET.	Page
I. <i>A short introduction, with an advice relating to health,</i>	1
II. <i>The plan of the letters, or the subjects of which they treat; on Classic historians,</i>	2
III. <i>On heathen moral writers,</i>	5
IV. <i>On the external evidence of the truth of religion,</i>	7
V. <i>On the same subject,</i>	9
VI. <i>On the means by which the first Christians were convinced of the authenticity of the New Testament Scriptures,</i>	12
VII. <i>The speedy propagation of the gospel an evidence of its truth,</i>	15
VIII. <i>On the same subject,</i>	17
IX. <i>On the same subject,</i>	19
X. <i>On the same subject,</i>	21
XI. <i>On the same subject,</i>	24
XII. <i>On the internal evidence of the truth of Christianity,</i>	26
XIII. <i>On the same subject,</i>	29
XIV. <i>On the same subject,</i>	31
XV. <i>Another argument, with an exhortation to read the scriptures frequently,</i>	35
XVI. <i>An exhortation to study the original of both Testaments,</i>	37
XVII. <i>On the dispositions of heart requisite in a preacher; the influence of ideas upon the heart; right ideas, or thoughts of God, dispose the heart to love him,</i>	40

LET.	Page
XVIII. <i>The want of love to God renders unacceptable to him, and generally unprofitable to others, all the duties which a man performs,</i>	45
XIX. <i>The want of love to God gives scope for the tyranny of the passions and the rebukes of conscience,</i>	51
XX. <i>The happy effects of devotion, or love to God,</i>	61
XXI. <i>Freedom from the power of evil passions, and peace of conscience,</i>	66
XXII. <i>On the external conduct of a minister; the virtues he ought to practice,</i>	70
XXIII. <i>On the same subject,</i>	74
XXIV. <i>On the same subject,</i>	81
XXV. <i>On the same subject,</i>	84
XXVI. <i>Observations relating to prudence,</i>	88
XXVII. <i>On the duties of a minister; such as preparation of sermons, or discourses, visiting the sick, and a good example,</i>	93
XXVIII. <i>On the same subject,</i>	99

LETTERS

FROM

A FATHER TO HIS SON.

LETTER I.

My Dear Son,

AS you are now entered upon the study of Theology, with a view to an office of all others the most important, both to yourself and to that part of society with which you may, in the course of providence, be connected, I mean, the office of a preacher, and perhaps of a minister of the gospel; I shall, in this and the following letters, give you some directions which may contribute to the success of your studies, to the improvement of your mind, and therefore to your happiness; imploring the blessing of God, without which no directions, however proper, can avail, and with which the most unpromising means will be crowned with success.

And in the first place, let me advise you to pay a proper attention to your health. Many young men, partly with a view to conquer the difficulties they meet with in the course of their studies, and partly in order to increase their stock of knowledge

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and the pleasure which results from it, confine themselves too much, and neglect to take that degree of exercise which is necessary for the preservation of health. The constitution of the body is such, that exercise to a certain degree is necessary for its health; and, therefore, for answering the purposes of the active mind. Without such exercise the body becomes disordered, health decays, the spirits flag, and the ardour of the mind, connected with a body so disordered, being cooled and damped, its efforts are rendered ineffectual. Thus many, by neglecting this caution, shorten their days, and many drag out a useless life in sickness and pain.

Take therefore the counsel which experience dictates. To the labour of the mind add the exercise of the body. If the weather permit, walk a few hours every day with an intelligent, cheerful, virtuous companion. This will contribute to your health, preserve your spirits in a proper tone; give a stimulus to your love of knowledge, and even better or improve your heart.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

Dear Son,

YOUR qualifications as a teacher of religion, I propose, for the sake of perspicuity, to consider under the following heads: Those which relate, 1. To your understanding, 2. To your heart; and, 3. To your public conduct.

1. With respect to your understanding. It is proper

per that you have it furnished with as many ideas, or with as much useful knowledge, as you can. A man who professes to be a teacher of others, should be qualified to impart to them all the important branches of knowledge, which their various circumstances require, and which are necessary in order to their happiness.

Now, though the desire of knowledge be natural, knowledge itself is not innate. It must be acquired with much labour, and by various means.

And as no man can communicate, in the ordinary course of things, to others, what he himself has never been possessed of, or give what he hath not some how or other received; you must, in youth, lay up a fund of knowledge, in order to answer the exigencies, and supply the defects of age. By the experience and wisdom of age, your building may be finished and adorned; but the materials must be collected in the days of youth. I shall begin with those branches of knowledge which are less material; and ascend, by degrees, to those which are more essential.

While you pursue, under the inspection of your teachers, your more serious studies, a certain portion of time, either during the session or vacation, or both, as your prudence shall direct, should be allotted for reading some of the writings of the ancients. Some of these I shall point out, together with the advantages which may be derived from an acquaintance with them.

You should, when you have opportunity, read, in the original, Herodotus, Xenophon, and Thucydides. These, though different in their style and

manner, excel in the historic department. There are others, inferior indeed to those above mentioned, whose works you may consult with advantage: Such as Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Plutarch, Dionysius Halicarnassensis. The Latin historians of highest fame, you know, are Tit. Livius, Sallust, Tacitus, Cæsar, and some others of inferior note.

These, having derived their knowledge in a great measure from the Greeks, have imitated their manner of writing; some the loose and flowing, and some the close and energetic style. Herodotus and Livy are examples of the first; Thucydides and Tacitus of the last. A mixture of both these would perhaps constitute the most perfect style. With the Greek and Latin poets, at least with the chief of them, you are already in some measure acquainted.

What advantage, you will say, can you derive from an acquaintance with the works of these authors?

1. By perusing them with attention and judgement, you will become acquainted with the proper structure of language, and acquire a good style both in writing and speaking. It is generally found, that they who read with taste the writings of classic authors, acquire, by imitation, the most classical style.

2. By reading these, you will perceive the various operations of the human passions and desires, and thereby become better acquainted with human nature itself; a subject which merits the particular study of every man of your profession.

3. By these you will discover the wonderful similarity

milarity of the appetites, of the affections, and pursuits of mankind; that human nature, in all ages, has been much the same; and therefore, that one God created all men, determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, and that one man was their original father.

4. These ancient writings furnish many testimonies favourable to revelation. In these you will trace traditional testimonies concerning the creation of the world; the innocent, or golden age of mankind; and their fall or corruption; concerning the flood; the preservation of one man and his family by means of an ark; the dove let out of the ark*; the destruction of Sodom and Gommorah; concerning Moses; the Israelites; their departure from Egypt; their entrance into Canaan; the amiable character of their leader, and of some of his successors; and concerning the Messiah, who, born in Judea, was to obtain the empire of the world, or, according to the idea of scripture, to inherit all nations.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER III.

Dear Son,

AS a motive to determine you to study the Greek and Latin classics, as opportunity or time will allow you, I have pointed out some of the advantages which you may derive from an acquaint-

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* See, Lucian de Dea Syria.

ance with them. I have hitherto confined my views, for the most part, to the historical writings of the ancients.

As to those which relate to theology and morals, you may consult Plato; Cicero on the nature of the gods, and his Tusculan questions; Arrian's Epictetus, Xenophon's memorable things of Socrates, Marcus Antoninus's meditations, Cicero de officiis, Plutarch's moral works, and Seneca.

In each of these you will meet with many good sentiments, but so detached, so unconnected with proper principles, and with such evidence of their ignorance of God, his perfections and will, of the immortality of the soul, and of the other motives to, or sources of virtue and obedience; that you will be moved with compassion for men who lived in an age of so much darkness and uncertainty, and who panted after happiness with so little hope of obtaining it. The more, indeed, you are acquainted with the works now mentioned, and with others of the same kind, the more clearly you will perceive the need of a more perfect and infallible guide, and the more you will prize and admire the sacred writings.

Some, enticed by the fine taste of the heathen classic writers, and some with the prospect of fame as the reward of their learning, devote much of their time to the study of their works; but, if you are wise, you will make your knowledge of them subservient to nobler purposes; you will consider these authors not as your masters, but servants: having a guide to knowledge and happiness much more

more noble and excellent,—the word of God, which is able to make you wise to salvation.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

Dear Son,

HAVING mentioned the sacred writings, the foundation of our hope, and of our felicity: In order to abridge your labour, and facilitate your inquiry concerning the evidence of their truth, or of their being the word of God, I shall endeavour briefly to explain to you the nature of that evidence. It is commonly distinguished into two kinds; the one is called the *external*, and the other the *internal* evidence of revelation.

The external evidence arises from miracles, from prophecies, and the speedy propagation of the gospel, notwithstanding the many obstacles which it had to surmount.

1. With respect to miracles. A miracle may perhaps be defined a work, which it surpasses the power of man to perform. Should a man, by a touch, or by a word spoken, open the eyes of men born blind; as we never saw or heard of one who, by his own power, was able to perform such wonderful cures, as the man testified whose eyes our Lord opened, John ix. 32. we must conclude that he performed such works by the aid of a power superior to his own.

In the course of your inquiry, you shall be

led perhaps to suppose, that an agent superior to man, such as an angel, may work miracles. We know not indeed the extent of the power of angels, but we know, that if the work performed be of the beneficent kind, if it contributes to the relief or happiness of men, if its natural tendency is to lead them to love, to obey, to imitate God, and therefore to honour him, it could not be performed by the agency of an evil being, or angel; as that being would thereby act contrary to his nature, and his supposed interest; a thing which cannot happen. "If Satan, saith our Lord, be divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand?"

If this work, or these works, were performed by a good angel, as such an angel does nothing but by the appointment, and according to the will of God, and by a power derived from him, we must consider that work to be the same as if it had been performed immediately by God himself. But by the sacred history we learn, that though many miracles were wrought by men, they were performed by the immediate agency of the Divine power.

When therefore a man appears and works miracles, these miracles are proofs that he was, as he professes, sent of God. And when he teaches certain doctrines, or communicates certain instructions (of the same beneficent tendency with his miracles), which he affirms he was commissioned by God to deliver to mankind, we have reason to believe, that he was commissioned so to teach, and are bound to receive his instructions, as coming from God. This observation will apply to all the teachers of religion

A FATHER TO HIS SON..

religion who wrought miracles, and whose names are recorded in the sacred books*.

I remain, my Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER V.

Dear Son,

PROPHECY affords another evidence of the truth of our religion. The gift of prophecy is a supernatural one, by the influence of which, men possessed of it foresee and predict events as yet future, and some of them perhaps very remote; which no man, however intelligent or sagacious he might be, could, without that gift or power, have foreseen, or predicted. With instances of such predictions the sacred writings abound.

And here the observation formerly made, concerning the supposed influence of good or evil angels in the case of miracles, might be again repeated on the subject of prophecy; but as you have immediate access to, or will easily remember it, a repetition would be superfluous.

You will probably ask, How could the prediction of an event be an evidence to those who heard it, that the man who delivered it was a prophet, and sent of God, until they saw the event accomplished? It is to be observed, that the distance between the prediction and the event foretold was sometimes so short, that the persons who heard the

* On the subject of Miracles, read Campbell and Adams.

one could easily see the other ; and thereby obtain full evidence of the truth.

The predictions of the different plagues to be inflicted on the Egyptians, were so soon fulfilled by the events, that a day sometimes hardly intervened between them ; and the whole were accomplished in a very short space.

Many instances, similar to these, of the short interval between the predictions and their accomplishment might be given ; and as the predictions were numerous, the events corresponding daily happening, would gradually prepare men interested in them, for the firm belief of such as related to future times, however distant ; to the revolutions, for instance, which were to take place in the kingdoms of the world ; to the coming of the Messiah ; to his death ; his resurrection ; and his coming to judge the world ; with the events which shall follow that judgment.

Many of these predictions, then daily verified, would afford to those to whom they were delivered sufficient evidence, that the immediate authors of them were prophets, or men sent of God ; and that the writings of these men, comprehending these predictions, with a variety of other instructions, were his word.

Though the prophets were under the influence of inspiration when they delivered their predictions ; you will ask, What evidence have we, that they were under the same influence when they communicated to mankind, and committed to writing, their other instructions ?

As mankind stood in need of a perfect system of religion,

religion, or of a perfect rule of faith and of manners, in order to attain to perfect happiness: as men, however intelligent, however pious and wise they may be, when left, in any case, entirely to the direction of their own reason, are apt to err, and must err, especially in matters so sublime, and so far removed from human observation as those of religion generally are; and as men, in their present corrupt state, are apt to embrace error rather than truth, and thus to wander out of the way, and to miss that happiness which the gospel was designed to confer; we may, without hesitation, conclude, that God would not infallibly direct the sacred writers in some cases, and in others leave them entirely to the direction of their own judgment; and thus defeat his own purpose, that is, the purpose of his glory by the communication of happiness to men.

What end could a number of infallible predictions have answered, without every other direction, equally infallible, necessary for men, in order to reap the benefit of these predictions? We may therefore infer, that not only in some, but in all cases relating to the instruction of men, God inspired and directed the sacred writers, 2 Tim. iii. 16. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Pet. i. 21. "Prophecy came not in old time, by the will of

"man,

“man, but holy men of God spake as they were
“moved by the Holy Ghost *.”

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

Dear Son,

HAVING mentioned the sacred writings, I am, for the sake of connection, to subjoin here a few additional observations, which should properly have been deferred till a future stage of our correspondence. You ask, How could Christians, when the truths of the gospel were first committed to writing, distinguish what writings were inspired, and what were not? The testimony of our Lord, who, in his discourses, often referred and appealed to the scriptures of the Old Testament, without any mark of disapprobation of any part of them, as false or erroneous, furnishes an evidence of the highest and most convincing nature, that these scriptures are the word of God.

With respect to the New Testament. The first Christians having frequently heard the apostles preaching the gospel, were thoroughly acquainted with the truths of it before they were committed to writing; and after they were recorded, they received

* On the subject of prophecy, you may read Sir Isaac Newton, Mede, M'Laurin, and Sherlock. But I particularly recommend Bishop Hurd's introduction to the study of prophecy, Bishop Newton, Halifax, and the other authors who preached on this topic at Warburton's lecture. Read also, Bennet on the inspiration of scripture.

ceived them, by means of their previous knowledge, confidently, and without any hesitation, as of Divine authority. And it may be farther observed, that when the apostle Paul, and some of the other apostles wrote epistles to particular churches, the Christians to whom they were addressed, having as clear evidence, and being as fully convinced, that these writings were the works of their respective authors, as any man can be of the authenticity of the epistles of his friends, with whom he hath often conversed, and with whose sentiments he is well acquainted, received them as the writings of inspired men.

This observation may be applied in general to all the parts of the New Testament.

And thus the first Christians were not obliged to wait till a council of learned, but fallible men should meet, and determine what scriptures they should receive as the word of God, and what they should reject. How weak and uncertain a foundation for their faith, and for ours, would the decision of such a council have proved ! And how thankful should we be, that Providence left no room for the trial of such an expedient !

From the account which I have given, you will easily perceive, that long before learned men appeared in the church, after the death of the apostles, all Christians had in general received all the parts of the New Testament as the ground of their faith, and the rule of their practice, and with the utmost care had transmitted them to their children and their successors.

But have these writings, passing through so many

ny ages, and so many hands, undergone no alteration, or suffered no material injury; and by what means have they been preserved uncorrupted? The scriptures being the word of God, and designed to accomplish the most noble ends—the honour of God, and the happiness of men; we have the best reason to believe, that he, whose influence extends through all, would so far watch over and protect them, as to prevent the introduction of any corruption or alteration that might frustrate the ends intended by them.

Some of the means, in the hand of God, by which they have been thus preserved, were,

1st, The zeal of the first Christians, and their attachment to the cause of Christianity.

The sacred writings they embraced as their inheritance, infinitely more interesting to them than gold or silver, or any worldly possession. By these they lived, from these they derived their instruction, their hope, their comfort, and happiness. In transcribing, therefore, copies of the scriptures, they would be so vigilant, that no material error could be admitted, either by their own carelessness or by the inattention or design of other men.

In the 2d place, Different opinions, relating to certain points, having been early entertained by the members of the Christian church, and therefore, different parties or sects, espousing these opinions, would, with peculiar zeal, attend to the motions of each other; so that should one party attempt to alter, or corrupt any passage, in order to favour their own opinion, the other would not fail to detect the fraud, and expose them to infamy and shame.

shame. And this cause hath not failed, from the beginning hitherto, to produce the same salutary effects. Accordingly, after all the laudable pains bestowed, the inquiries, and collations of different copies, made by the learned in different kingdoms, especially in our own, in order to discover and correct the errors, which, by the carelessness of transcribers, may have crept into the sacred writings; no error that can materially affect or alter any doctrine, or precept of Christianity, has been discovered. How great cause of joy to Christians is this! What a source of gratitude to God, by whose influence and kindness the bible hath been transmitted to us, through so many hands, and amidst so great dangers, entire and uncorrupted*!

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

Dear Son,

THE last external evidence of the authenticity of the gospel revelation which I mentioned, and propose to illustrate, arises, from the speedy propagation of the gospel, notwithstanding the many obstructions which lay in the way of it; and which,

* Read Leland's divine authority of the Old and New Testaments; Stennet on the authority and use of scripture; a sermon of Mr Martin's of Monimeal, on the preservation and transmission of the holy scriptures; Gibson on the credibility of the gospel history; and Findlay's vindication of the sacred Books against Voltaire. You should also read, Shucford's and Prideaux's connections of sacred and profane history, and Vitringa's hypotyposis historiarum et chronologiae sacrae.

to human powers, and ordinary means, would have been insuperable.

For the sake of perspicuity, I shall first point out the obstructions, and then the means which God employed for removing or overcoming them.

1. With respect to the difficulties or obstructions which the gospel had to encounter, (not to mention the prejudices and enmity of the Jews, which, in the New Testament history, you will see expressed in various ways, and upon many occasions), I shall consider the prejudices of the common people, in the heathen world, in favour of their own religion; the pride of philosophers; the selfishness of priests; and the authority and policy of princes.

As to the prejudices of the common people. Whatever opinions men have been long accustomed to entertain, whether they be proper or improper, true or false, to these they become so much attached, and of these they are so tenacious, that no evidence can convince, nor any argument determine them to alter their opinions, even when they are wrong, or ill founded. This observation will be found true; particularly with respect to religious opinions. Among the different sects of Christians, when men have been trained from their infancy in the belief of certain tenets or doctrines, handed down through a long list of progenitors; these, though but partially true, or perhaps altogether false, they firmly believe; for these they contend with all their might, reject with abhorrence every opinion inconsistent with them, and despise, or even hate those who hold them. If, then, men professing Christianity, who enjoy more light, and better opportunities

portunities of information than the heathen, by the force of education, and the influence of custom, adopt opinions relating to matters of religion, which may be, and in some cases are really false, and adhere to them with obstinacy; how much more may we expect to meet with such prejudices, and such conduct among the heathen? Accustomed from their infancy, to see their parents and neighbours employed in performing certain religious rites, and offering prayers to their gods; having no judgment to discern the truth, nor opportunity of proper information, they adopted that mode of religion as the best, and were prepared at all hazards to oppose every other. Their minds, prepossessed with error, were effectually shut against the light of truth. Thus their former habits, their passions and prejudices, had room to operate; and thus, not only by means of their own prejudices, but by the influence of the unbelieving Jews, and of their heathen rulers, they were always ready to resist the gospel, and to persecute its friends. You will find many instances of this in the New Testament. See particularly Acts xiiith and xivth chapters.

I am, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Dear Son,

ANOTHER obstruction to the progress of the gospel was the pride of philosophers. When you become acquainted with the history, and the writings of these philosophers, you will easily perceive, that

that their knowledge, particularly respecting religion, was very limited and imperfect, or rather that their ignorance was very great. Sensible that the stores of their domestic knowledge were very scanty, many of them, I mean of the Greek philosophers, travelled into foreign countries; and, after all their acquisitions, how imperfect and false were their ideas of God, of the origin of the world, and of the government of it; of the mind of man, and of his future destination!

The best articles, or the most important truths, which they had imported, they hid, for the most part, under the veil of fables; or, at least, having received them in that dress, they transmitted them to their countrymen in the same form. They excelled in the arts of speaking and of writing: but, notwithstanding of this, they not only did not attempt to instruct the common people, but they neglected and despised them, as a race far inferior to themselves. Having acquired a certain species of knowledge, which they called wisdom, or philosophy, as some with more modesty denominated it, i. e. the love of wisdom, "they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened." "By their wisdom, the apostle even says, they knew "not God." In what light would the apostles and first Christians, who published doctrines so totally different from all that they had ever heard, or taught, appear to these vain men? In a most contemptible one without doubt. Although they were split into a variety of parties, although they hated, and contended fiercely with one another, they were all ready to unite in opposing every attempt

tempt towards innovation, or the alteration or overthrow of their own system. Every eye was vigilant, and every hand armed, in defence of the plan which they had adopted. Thus certain philosophers, of the Epicureans and Stoicks, though men of very opposite principles, encountered the apostle Paul when he was at Athens: "And some said, "What will this babler say? Other some, he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he "preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection." How much derision and contempt are expressed here? And, at the same time, what keen opposition to the new doctrine? "And they took and brought him to "Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new "doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?" Acts xvii.

"Then there arose certain of the synagogue, "which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, "of the Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them "of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen," Acts vi. 9. This was perhaps a college of Jewish philosophers; at least, they were men of the same spirit with that of the Greeks formerly mentioned.

Dear Son, I remain,

Yours, &c.

LETTER IX.

Dear Son,

ANOTHER obstruction in the way of Christianity was, the selfishness of the priests. The number of gods in the heathen world was immense: and

and the priests employed in their service were numerous in proportion. To these may be added, a multitude of artificers, servants or retainers of various orders, dependant upon the priests attached to the several temples, and to the worship performed in them. The lands consecrated, the offerings made, and the gifts presented for the support of these temples, and of the priesthood, must have constituted a vast fund of wealth, by which a numerous body of men, reputed sacred, were maintained in luxury, in affluence, and ease.

Concerning the lands of the Egyptian priests you will read in Genesis xlviiith chapter. Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, you know, also treat of the distinction, of the wealth, and the influence of that class. From the history of these, we may judge of the circumstances, of the riches, and power of all others of the same order, in all other nations through the heathen world.

Now, as Christianity was designed, and had a tendency to introduce the knowledge and worship of the one true God, to banish polytheism and idolatry; and consequently, to overturn that system from which a class of men, so numerous, and so powerful, derived not only their subsistence, but much wealth, authority, and pleasure; we may easily suppose, though we had not the evidence which providence hath furnished, that it would be an object of jealousy and aversion; that the priests and their retainers, in the utmost hazard of losing at once their religion and wealth, would be fired with the keenest resentment against the preachers and friends.

friends of Christianity, and ready armed to persecute and destroy them.

A specimen of this opposition to the apostles, to their companions, and to the gospel which they preached, was the tumult raised by Demetrius, a silver smith, and his companions of the same occupation, probably under the influence of the priests belonging to the temple of Ephesus.

Ye know, said he, "that by this craft," that is, by making silver shrines for Diana, the goddess of the Ephesians, "we have our wealth, &c. so that "not only our craft is in danger to be set at "nought; but also, that the temple of the great "goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia, "and the world worshippeth." By this speech the minds of the people were inflamed, a tumult was raised; and had not Providence interposed, the apostle and his companions would have been torn in pieces, Acts xix.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER X.

Dear Son,

ANOTHER impediment which Christianity had to surmount was the power and pride of the rulers of the heathen world. The Roman emperor, for instance, raised to be the head of so vast an empire, having under his direction so many classes of men in every department, must have been possessed of

of great power; and therefore very formidable to men of any profession, who happened to be objects of his resentment; and his resentment would be easily kindled by the insinuations and complaints of interested and designing men of every order, ready, upon the slightest ground, to enter in, and to communicate suspicions relating to the danger to which their religion and the state were exposed. These suspicions or complaints being transmitted to the chief ruler, or to his ministers, by governors of provinces, or magistrates of cities, and to these again by the superstitious mob, or by interested priests, he was ready, by the immense force at his command, to crush any sect, which had been represented by its enemies as holding opinions which were dangerous. Nay, his servants, without his interference, and even without his knowledge, were often disposed to execute upon the professors of Christianity, laws, or edicts, however unjust and severe; and frequently without the authority of an edict they persecuted these innocent men. Our Saviour was accused by his enemies, as a perverter of the people, and an enemy to Cæsar. Pilate, convinced that these accusations were groundless, and that Jesus was innocent, made many efforts to acquit him; but the Jews cried out, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." The timid governor yielded, and the consequence was, Jesus was crucified. The passage now quoted relates to the Jews; but the heathen, it is evident, were equally ill disposed. When the apostle, at Philippi, had cured the pythoness, or
cast

cast out of a woman the spirit of divination; her masters, seeing that the hope of their gains was gone, caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market place, unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans: And the multitude rose up together against them, and the magistrates laid many stripes upon them," Acts xvi. Our Saviour, addressing his disciples, told them, "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you;" which accordingly came to pass. They were accused, but falsely, as pestilent men, and raisers of sedition among the people, and persecuted accordingly. "We are made," saith the apostle, "as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day," 1 Cor. iv. 13.—For farther particulars relating to this subject, I refer you to the history of the New Testament, and to that of the church subsequent to the Apostolic age*.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

* You will find much information and pleasure from perusing Milner's church history, Newton's (of London) review of ecclesiastical history; Mosheim's church history; and Millar's propagation of Christianity.—In Jablonski's institutiones historiæ Christianæ, there is an excellent and distinct abridgement of the principal and best authenticated facts in ancient ecclesiastical history; and many curious and interesting facts in the modern state of the church, are to be found in Dr Briskine's sketches and hints of church history, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

Dear Son,

HAVING pointed out the chief impediments which lay in the way of the propagation of Christianity, I shall now consider the means employed for removing or surmounting them. These means were, the instructions communicated by the apostles and their successors, accompanied by the miracles which they wrought, and the manner of life which they exhibited.

As to their instructions. The doctrine which they principally recommended was the doctrine of the cross, or faith in a Saviour who had been crucified, as the only ground of hope, and the only way to salvation. The duties which they recommended were devotion, not to the gods which the heathen worshipped, but to the true God, who made heaven and earth, and all things in them; uprightness of conduct, patience under affliction, forgiveness of injuries, kindness and benevolence to all men, even to enemies; and the strictest sobriety with respect to themselves. A system in all respects so humiliating to the pride of mankind, so adverse to their feelings, their views and prepossessions, that no man who recommended it could entertain any hope, that, without supernatural aid, it would succeed.

With respect to the influence of the miracles wrought by the apostles, and of their pious and beneficent lives, even these, without supernatural aid, would produce but a slight and temporary effect.

fect. The children of Israel in the wilderness lived by miraculous interpositions, and their leader was distinguished by every virtue; and yet so much did they provoke God by their unbelief, and by their disobedience, that, a very few excepted, he destroyed them in the wilderness. The life of our Saviour, after he appeared as a teacher, was a life of miracles, of piety, of humanity, of temperance, and of good works; and yet how few, comparatively speaking, believed in him, or became his real friends! He cured at once ten lepers, but of these one only returned to give God thanks; and among those who cried, Crucify him, crucify him, there were perhaps some, perhaps many, whose friends, or themselves, had reaped the benefit of his miracles. The result was, that this heavenly teacher was put to death.

The religion of Mahomet was very successful, and propagated in a short time through many kingdoms; but in this case there is no cause of wonder: For, on the one hand, men were intimidated by the fear of the sword; and, on the other, enticed by the future prospect of sensual pleasures,—objects perfectly adapted to the corrupt desires and passions of men. These proved temptations which few had the courage to resist. Opposed then to Christianity were all the passions of human nature; vanity, pride, selfishness, the love of pleasure, of honour, and of wealth; the learning then in vogue; and the civil power, which was very formidable; and all these fortified by strong prejudices, and confirmed by long continued and deep rooted habits. On the side of Christianity was a system of religion re-

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commended by the preaching of a few poor, simple, illiterate men, a system quite adverse to the prejudices, the habits, the pursuits, and prospects of mankind; and subversive of that superstructure which had been reared with so much care, cemented by the influence of so many ages, and guarded by so many hosts of men, and, shall I add, of devils also.

To any man therefore of the least reflection, it will evidently appear as impossible, that Christianity could, without the agency of supernatural power, have prevailed, and that the opposing systems could have fallen before it, as that the walls of Jericho should have fallen by the shouting of the people who surrounded them, or by the sound of the rams horns. Since, then, Christianity hath thus prevailed, and was in a few years propagated through great part of the then known world, the excellency of the power was evidently of God, and not of man; and therefore the Christian religion is of God*.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XII.

Dear Son,

IN the preceding letter, I have given you a brief account of the external, and now proceed to point out some of the internal evidences of the truth of Christianity. Of these may be mentioned,

* To give you a view of the origin, progress, nature, and tendency of Mahometanism, see White's sermons at Bampton Lecture, and Sale's Koran.

ed, the harmony or concert of the various parts of the sacred writings ; their suitableness to our condition ; and the experience which real Christians possess of their truth.

The harmony or concert of the various parts of the scriptures, furnishes a strong proof that God is the author of them. Beside the history contained in the scriptures, of the great events which have happened in the world,—of the rise, of the fall, and succession of kingdoms ; beside the biography of particular persons, and predictions of revolutions which were afterwards to take place, there is evidently a great scheme introduced, and carried on through the whole, upon which all the other parts now mentioned depend, and to which they are made subservient. And this scheme, or plan, relates to the Messiah, who, by his wonderful interposition, was to save his people from their sins. This plan was early brought to light, by the promise, concerning the Seed of the woman, delivered to our first parents. It was gradually unfolded in the course, and by the direction of providence. Its nature was explained, and its accomplishment predicted, by men who lived in ages, many of them so very remote from one another, that they could not possibly act in concert, or with design ; and, I may add, by men who did not perfectly understand the nature and circumstances of the plan which they described: 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12. “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace which should come unto you: searching what, and what manner of time, the Spirit of

“ Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it
“ testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and
“ the glory that should follow : unto whom it was
“ revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us,
“ they did minister the things, which are reported
“ unto you by them that have preached the gos-
“ pel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down
“ from heaven; which things the angels desire to
“ look into.”

Even our Lord's disciples, who enjoyed advantages, in point of instruction, superior to those of other men, did not comprehend the meaning of the prophetic writings, nor of their Master's instructions, till, after his resurrection, “ he opened their
“ understandings, that they might understand the
“ scriptures.”

Here then is a plan consisting of many parts, in the execution of which were involved, the glory of God and the happiness of men ; a plan gradually executed by the ministry of men, who generally lived at periods of time so distant from one another, that they could not act in concert, or by combination ; by the ministry of men who did not perfectly comprehend the meaning of the parts which they were employed to act, nor the meaning of those which had been performed by their predecessors, or were to be performed by those who were to succeed them. By what influence, then, did these men complete a scheme, comprehending so much wisdom, so much beneficence and love ? By what else but the influence, or inspiration of him, who “ declared the end from the beginning
“ and from ancient times the things which are not
“ yet

"yet done?" Isa. xlv. 10. "Holy men of God
 "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,"
 2 Pet. i. 21.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XIII.

Dear Son,

THE suitableness of the gospel revelation to our present state, is another internal evidence of its divine original. The moral law, compared with the original powers, with the affections and appetites of our nature, as far as we are able to judge of them, shews a conformity, or suitableness, so wonderfully exact and perfect, that the Legislator discovers a knowledge of our nature far superior to that of any man, or of any creature; from which we have reason to infer, that the author of that law was the author of our nature, or the Creator of mankind.

Again, all men feel distress, not only in their bodies, but also in their minds. They are afflicted with remorse, with fear, and a sense of moral servitude. The scriptures not only point out the connection between sin and punishment, or misery; but likewise the source of sin, or the manner of its introduction, and its prevalence among mankind. A man in real distress of mind, would give the world, were it in his possession, to obtain relief; but how is this relief to be discovered or procured? Let him turn his eyes inward upon himself, let

him examine all the objects around him, he can nowhere find a remedy. What is past, he knows he cannot recal; and what he hath done amiss, he can never alter or undo. If sorrow for the past could have atoned for guilt, or ministered relief, as he hath already felt much sorrow, he should have already recovered his happiness; but as he still feels his pain unabated, for ought he can discover, he may continue to sorrow for ever.

Will God, without any atonement for the past, be pleased with a change of heart, and with reformation of life? What evidence can the afflicted man have, that God will pardon sin without an atonement? And, supposing God could or would thus pardon, How is this change of mind, and this reformation of life, to be accomplished? Was ever a man's heart changed, and devoted to God, without previous reconciliation with him? And how that reconciliation is to be brought about, it is impossible for him to discover.

In this distressed condition, the gospel comes seasonably to his relief. There the Son of God appears, humbled to a low degree, and suffering in the most awful manner, the just for the unjust, that he might bring men to God.

There he is revealed as risen from the dead, and sitting at the right hand of God. In the gospel there are kind invitations to sinners to come to Christ, in whom they will find rest; and merciful declarations, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but obtain the pardon of sin, and inherit eternal life.

Thus the moral law, in all its parts, appears to him

him to have been perfectly adapted to the original principles of his nature; and the gospel to his present state, as a sinner full of wants and of miseries? This revelation, therefore, coming so seasonably, bringing with it a remedy by which the honour of God is secured, and happiness restored to miserable men; a remedy so excellent and noble, that neither he, nor, as far as he can discover, any other creature could have devised or accomplished, he embraces it as a revelation from God, upon which he builds his hope, by which he regulates his conduct, and from which he derives his happiness; and the comfortable experience of its truth, which he gradually acquires, answers to him the purpose of a demonstration, and removes every shadow of doubt*.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XIV.

Dear Son,

WHAT I have said at the conclusion of my last, relating to the evidence of the truth of revelation, furnished by the experience of those who really believe it, leads me to illustrate that subject more particularly.

In scripture, God denounces a curse against transgressors, and threatens that the wicked shall not be unpunished. The pains which the men of that

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description

* See Dr Kemp's sermon, in the fourth volume of the Scotch Preacher.

description feel, and the dread of greater misery which they apprehend, shew, that the threatening was founded in truth, and that he who denounced the punishment is able, throughout all his dominions, with the greatest ease, to inflict it.

Alarmed, both by what they feel and apprehend; and finding, in the same scriptures, the wonderful history of a great person,—of Jesus the Son of God, who was humbled deeply, and suffered greatly for the sins of men; that he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; that he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that he offered himself to God, a sacrifice and an offering of a sweet-smelling savour; and that he bare our sins in his own body on the tree: finding besides, many gracious declarations, such as those now mentioned; many kind invitations and precious promises, perfectly adapted to their condition, and encouraging to their afflicted minds; for instance, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst; him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out; to him gave all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sin.”

Perceiving also from the scripture history, that many, in a situation similar to theirs, by believing, had obtained relief; being likewise enabled to believe, they receive pardon, and some comfortable
portion

portion of that peace, which, by the appointment of God, is annexed to remission: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Again, though, by means of faith in Christ, their views and tempers have undergone a change, they still find in themselves much ignorance, and many corruptions, which prove to them a source of much uneasiness and disappointment; and, without deliverance from which, they foresee that they can neither obey perfectly, nor be completely happy.

Suited to this situation they find promises which minister relief, Ezek. xi. "I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them." The effects of these promises they observe in the tempers and lives of their brethren, in every age, who believe. 2 Cor. v. 57. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are past away, and behold all things are become new." 1 Cor. vi. 11. "Such were some of you, i. e. great sinners, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Therefore, depending upon these promises, and by many prayers, looking earnestly for the accomplishment of them, they find their former views altered, their old habits gradually weakened and overcome, their natures renewed and sanctified; and, in a word, that "old things are past away, and all things made new."

Farther, while they are in the body, and by many ties connected with it, they are apt to feel many cares, which, without the aid of heaven, would prove an impediment in their course, and a burden which they could not bear; but from this they are also relieved by the belief of the scriptures, Matth. v. 25. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on: Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Philip. iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing, &c.; and the peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, by Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. v. 7. "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you."

Accordingly, by trusting in these promises, and by the use of lawful means, they find provision made for themselves, and for their families; their minds are relieved, they are disengaged from anxious cares; and their duty, in every respect, becomes easy and delightful. Thus, by believing the promises of the gospel, they find by experience that their sins are forgiven, that their former views are changed, their sinful habits vanquished, or subdued, their anxieties banished, their hopes revived, and their peace multiplied. Works these, which no imagination could effect, no, nor all the powers of the creation accomplish! These then are the works of God; and these promises the means by which they are executed;—his promises, and the book of which they make a constituent part, his word. The experience then of Christians,

ans, acquired by the belief of the scriptures, affords them an evidence equal to that of demonstration, and much more satisfying to the mind, that the Bible is of divine inspiration. Upon the bulk of Christians, it may here be remarked, that the internal evidence of Christianity operates most powerfully, and convinces most effectually: their circumstances put it out of their power to purchase many books, nor have they time for reading, for investigation, or study; with them the external evidence hath its weight, but the internal, being most level to their capacities, and most adapted to their feelings and wants, most powerfully convinces their minds, and affects their hearts. Why do many embrace the revelation of the gospel as true, live by its precepts, and build their hopes upon its promises? Because they find it perfectly suited to their condition, an effectual remedy for their wants and pains; and because they feel, by experience, that it is infallibly true; and therefore that it is a revelation from heaven.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XV.

Dear Son,

SOME are of opinion, that without an external revelation mankind never could have obtained the knowledge of God, in any degree; of their duty; of the immortality of the soul; nor of many other truths, essential to human happiness: and that, since

since they have attained to the knowledge of these things, that knowledge must have been derived from an external revelation, and that revelation must have been from God. If then you shall, upon inquiry, find that this opinion is well founded, and therefore be led to adopt it, you will have another evidence, added to those above mentioned, amounting to a demonstration that the Bible is the word of God. Any one of these evidences, much more all of them taken together, will abundantly satisfy every attentive mind, and yield the most pleasing conviction to every serious man, that our scriptures, commonly accounted sacred, are of divine original.

Since, then, the Bible is the word of God, of which I hope you are, by his blessing, fully persuaded, how frequently, how attentively, and how devoutly, should we peruse it! It contains the most ancient, and most authentic history of the origin of the world; of the creation; of the fall and recovery of man; and of the providence of God, by which he upholds and governs all things: the most sublime doctrines, the purest and most excellent precepts, and the most faithful and precious promises; it administers the most severe, but salutary reproofs, the most wholesome counsel, and the most substantial comfort. It presents the most awful, the most glorious and amiable objects, the discovery of which humbles the pride, cherishes the hopes, engages the affections of the human heart, abstracts it from mean and unworthy pursuits, and secures the happiness of those who become acquainted with them.

If we add, that in all its parts it is infallibly true and certain, its superior excellence, compared with that of every other book, will clearly appear. The more then you are acquainted with the Bible, the happier you will be, and the more useful in the station in which Providence may place you: the more your prayers and discourses favour of the knowledge and love of the scriptures, the more acceptable they will be to God, and the more profitable to those who hear you.

To all the serious and devout, the scriptures have, in all ages, been the subject of daily meditation, and the joy and rejoicing of their hearts in the house of their pilgrimage. God grant that they may be so to you, and that by their means you may be made to rise unto salvation*.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XVI.

Dear Son,

I HAVE thus pointed out a summary of the evidence by which our Christian religion is proved to be of God. Before I leave this subject, it will be proper to recommend to you another circumstance which deserves your most serious attention, and that is a thorough acquaintance with the original language, both of the Old and of the New Testament. Men of your profession generally satisfy themselves with the study and knowledge

* See Leland on the Nature and Necessity of divine Revelation; Guise on the Excellency and use of the Scripture.

ledge of the Greek; and having neglected, till they are advanced in life, the Hebrew language, they cannot submit to what they consider as a drudgery; and thus either condemn a language of which they know not the value, or, despairing of being able to surmount the difficulties, they renounce the study of it.

Now, to depend upon the opinion of others, with respect to the translation or meaning of any passage of the Old Testament, or of the whole of that book, when you had, and still have it in your power, by acquiring the knowledge of the language, to judge for yourself, must be very humiliating and painful to your mind.

How can you recommend, with confidence, to your hearers, whom you are bound to instruct in the knowledge of the scriptures, the meaning of this or the other passage, which you profess to explain; but of the original language, of which you yourself are ignorant, and for the sense of it, which you propose, you are indebted to the opinion of others who are fallible men, and may therefore betray you into an error, or mistake; and that too in a case, perhaps, very interesting both to yourself and to others? Or, in such a situation, how can you satisfy your own mind?

Whereas, by studying the Hebrew, and, if you could, some other languages connected with it, you will enjoy the accumulated pleasure of labour laudably bestowed, of the knowledge of a language acquired, which should be endeared to us, as the original language of the Old Testament; of judging for yourself with respect to the meaning

ing of the difficult passages of that book; and of recommending to others, with confidence and satisfaction, your interpretation of it. I have hitherto considered the evidence and truth of the sacred scriptures, by means of which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, you have been, like many others, or may be, led to the knowledge of God; of which knowledge I might have, with propriety, treated; but as that subject is intimately connected with another, which I intend to consider in the next place, I mean the dispositions of your heart, I shall endeavour, in some measure, to discuss it in my next letters*.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

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* In the mean time, permit me to recommend to you a few of the principal books on the evidences of Christianity, which you ought to study with the greatest care. Halyburton against deism; Brown on natural and revealed religion; Grotius; Abbadie; Jenkins on the reasonableness and certainty of the Christian religion; Paley's view of the evidences of Christianity; Conybear's defence of revealed religion; McKnight on the truth of the Christian religion; Campbell on miracles; Leland's view of the deistical writers, for information respecting the objections to Christianity by the English deists, and the answers to them; the Bishop of London's pastoral letters; the trial of the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus; Lord Littleton on the conversion of the Apostle Paul, and the essay on the Ethiopian eunuch,—the three last were lately published in Edinburgh, in a small volume; West on the resurrection. When you have read such of these books as you may have access to, Beattie on the evidences of the Christian religion will furnish you with a short and pleasant summary of what is most important on this subject; as will also Dickinson's familiar letters. It is a subject which you ought to study with deep attention. The deistical is very much the controversy of the day. It is impossible to be much in the world, without having the mortification to hear the loose witticisms of Voltaire,
or

LETTER XVII.

Dear Son,

I AM now to describe the dispositions of heart requisite in every Christian, much more in one of your profession. Hitherto I have been treating of the scriptures, of their truth and superior excellence. You will easily perceive that they were not designed as an end, but as a mean in order to an end, and one great end intended by them was, to inform us concerning God.

That the mind, or the ideas communicated by the mind, have a natural and powerful influence on the heart; and that, by means of these, the heart becomes well or ill disposed, are truths which cannot be controverted. According to our original constitution, we were endowed with appetites which respected our own preservation and happiness; and with affections also, which had for their objects our fellow-men, and God our Creator. Thus men are endowed with the natural love of life, and the means necessary for its preservation; they are fond of the esteem or good opinion of their fellow-men. Upon these appetites, or desires, are ingrafted, by mankind, the inordinate, and, I may perhaps add, the unnatural and extravagant love of pleasure, of wealth, and honour. Gratitude

or the dark sophisms of Hume, retailed, and often by persons who cannot think for themselves; but who wish, in this way, to harden themselves in a vicious course, or to pass for men of superior understanding. Furnish yourself with answers to their objections, and make yourself as much master of the subject as possible.

titude for kindness shewn is also natural, and resentment for an injury received; and envy, an inordinate passion, which one man feels when he sees another more prosperous, or more favoured than himself. And thus good men naturally love one another, and pious men love God. Upon these last mentioned affections are, in some degree, founded the two great commandments of the law,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.”

The natural object of love is beauty. Of beautiful objects, some are natural and some moral. Objects naturally beautiful, are the works of God: and God himself, with all rational creatures who resemble him, are objects of moral beauty; he in a supreme, and they in a very inferior degree. I say nothing of artificial beauties, which consist in the imitation of nature.

Moral beauty consists in knowledge, wisdom, power, holiness, righteousness, truth, goodness, compassion, and love. It will be said, that some of these are natural, not moral perfections; but you may observe, that they are all so strictly connected, that you cannot consider or explain the one, without attending, or having respect, to the other.

How can goodness, for instance, produce its effects, or obtain its purposes, without knowledge to discern, wisdom to point out the best ends, and power to accomplish them?

Intemperance, impurity, or that species of moral turpitude in us, takes its rise from the body, and from our connection with corporeal appetites. Injustice and falsehood, or deceit, proceed from our defects.

defects, from our want of knowledge, of wisdom, and power, to discover, to chuse and accomplish that which will most effectually promote our own interest and the honour of God. Whereas God, being a pure Spirit, having no connection with a body, being free from every defect, and altogether perfect, is infinitely and naturally pure, righteous, and true; and this infinite perfection, of which he is possessed, renders it impossible for him to speak falsely, to do any wrong, or any thing that is inconsistent with perfect holiness.

It is impossible for God to lie. Heb. vi. 18. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." Psal. cxlv. 17. "Be ye holy, saith God, for I am holy." 1 Pet. i. 16. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." His goodness is visible every where, manifested through all his works.

Compassion hath for its object the unhappy, or miserable, and tends to their relief; and God's compassion, when we were miserable, operated our deliverance. We can love no object unless it appear to us to be amiable, and adapted to our affection; whereas the love of God is so like himself, so perfect, so operative, and so superior to ours, that when we were sinners, and therefore hateful, it was manifested in us; "herein he commended his love to us, in that, when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Since God then is infinitely amiable, and since we love good men who imitate and resemble him, even in a low degree, how much more should we love him who is supremely excellent, and the

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source of all moral beauty? But is it as common and as easy a matter to love God, as it is to speak of him, or describe his perfections? Alas, it is not! Since the introduction of sin, the mind of every man hath been darkened. By means of this darkness, truths are misrepresented. By this misrepresentation, sin, or corruption, has room to operate, and exert its influence upon the heart; and by the corruption of the heart, the darkness of the mind is increased; and, in many cases, how great at last must that darkness be! If men do not see God as amiable, they cannot love him. If they love him not supremely, they violate the law, and incur the displeasure of the lawgiver. By a consciousness of demerit, and by the effects of God's anger, which they feel, they are led to consider him as an enemy; and, as an enemy, they hate him. Thus we read of the heathen who were alienated from the "Life of God, through the ignorance that was in them," Ephes. iv. 18; "and of the carnal mind that is enmity against God," Rom. viii. 7.; and of the reconciliation of men to God by the death of his Son, which supposes a previous enmity, or alienation.

These consequences are the result of the law which God hath established; namely, that they who forsake him, who is the fountain of light, must walk in darkness, and feel the effects which darkness produces. How is this veil to be withdrawn, this darkness removed, and this anger turned away? The gospel informs us. There we read, "That God sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" that our Saviour, after the most pious,

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the most benevolent, and amiable life, by which he fulfilled the law, humbled himself to the death, even the death of the cross; bearing our sins, or the punishment which our sins deserved, in his own body on the tree: And that he who believeth in the Son hath life; that is, he obtains the pardon of his sins, is renewed in the spirit of his mind, restored to the favour of God, to the love of his name, and to the practice of his duty. Whoever then, by the light of his word and the influence of his Spirit, convinced of sin, sensible of his need, and of his inability to relieve himself, is enabled to believe in the Son of God, finds all the precious promises of the gospel gradually accomplished to him: his light increases, and in that light he perceives that God is reconciled to him, therefore he is reconciled to God; and being thus reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, he enjoys the pleasant hope, that he shall be saved by his life. He is therefore disposed to love him, and every thing which he knows he loves. For he now sees God as amiable; and that his amiableness is displayed to the highest degree, by his love manifested in the death of his Son. These two, his natural amiableness, and his redeeming love, like two strong cords, constrain the Christian, by their powerful, their pleasant, and irresistible force, to love him and his Son above all things, and withdraw his heart from the inordinate love of every thing besides. “The love of Christ constraineth us;”—impells, elevates, incites to the most generous disinterested and beneficent conduct, “to live not to ourselves, but to him that died for us.”

From

From the observations now made, you will easily see, that the thoughts, or ideas of your mind, have a natural and powerful influence upon your heart, either to refine and improve, or to corrupt and debase it : and that the thoughts or ideas of God, however little attention men generally pay to them, are the natural sources of devotion, and of peace here, and of the happiness of heaven hereafter : or of guilt and misery in this world, and of the sorrows of hell in the next.

My Dear Son, what words can express the vast importance of this subject ! How solicitous ought you to be to obtain, and to preserve right thoughts, or views, of God and of his Son ? For if you err here, you will err in every thing else : whereas, if your views relating to this subject are just, or your ideas true, truth will guide your steps through life, and at last you will inherit a crown of glory.

I am, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XVIII.

Dear Son,

IN my last, I endeavoured to point out the influence which your ideas, or thoughts, must naturally have upon your heart : and to shew that right thoughts, or proper views of God, will dispose you to love him and his Son, and every thing which you perceive he loves, and in which he delights. Now, love to God is the most noble, and most excellent

cellent of all the graces, and absolutely necessary in every Christian, and in every man especially who proposes to be a teacher of religion. From this grace, or heavenly disposition, spring the most useful and pleasant fruits, immense in number, inestimable in value, and endless in duration. And, on the other hand, the want of this love produces effects equally numerous, but of a most awful and melancholy kind. These last I propose to describe, in some measure, in the first, and the other in the next place.

I. With respect to the pernicious effects which the want of love to God produces, although I hope, that by means of your piety, and by the blessing of God, you will escape these; yet a description of them may be useful, as by means of it you may be rendered more vigilant, more grateful, and more diligent in the work of God. The apostle, in the epistle to the Hebrews, with chap. comparing mere professors, who enjoy the means of grace, but produce not the corresponding fruits, to the ground, which, receiving the rain from heaven, bringeth forth thorns and briers, is rejected, and nigh to "cursing, whose end is to be burned;" adds, "but, brethren, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

Some of the effects which the want of devotion, or love to God produces, are these: It renders unacceptable to God, and in a great measure unprofitable to men, all your services, or the performance of all your duties. It gives scope for the operation of the passions, which enslave the mind; and

and the slavery of the passions creates remorse, despondency, and misery.

First, the want of devotion, or love to God, will render unacceptable to him, and in a great measure unprofitable to men, all your services. God formed the heart of man for himself; and hence his law requires, that we love him with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. My son give me thine heart. Should a man address us in the language of friendship, or, in the time of our distress, perform, for our relief, a kind of generous service; if we have reason to believe, that these kind words, and this generous deed, are the genuine effects of love and attachment, they are highly acceptable to us. His love renders them particularly pleasing and delightful. We love his person, and are grateful for his kindness. But if we happen to discover, that in all this, love had no share; that these professions were hollow and deceitful; and intended merely to promote some selfish end of his own, and by no means for our benefit, our hearts become cold and averse to the man, and we despise his hypocritical services.

These feelings are natural, and agreeable to our original constitution. How much more must God, who has a better claim to the affections of men than we can have, and to whom the secrets and operations of every heart are open and manifest, despise all these professions of love to him, and reject all those services which are performed, in appearance, for his sake; but with which, mean while, the heart is unconnected, and to which it remains a stranger?

The

The Lord said, "For as much as this people
 "draw near me with their mouth, and with their
 "lips do honour me, but have removed their heart
 "far from me, and their fear towards me is taught
 "by the precept of men; therefore, behold I will
 "proceed to do a marvellous work among this peo-
 "ple, even a marvellous work and a wonder; for
 "their wise men shall perish, and the understand-
 "ing of their prudent men shall be hid," Isa.
 xxix. 13.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and
 "of angels, and have not charity, I am become as
 "a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbol. And
 "though I have the gift of prophecy, and under-
 "stand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and
 "though I have faith, so that I could remove
 "mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.
 "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the
 "poor; and though I give my body to be burned,
 "and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing,"
 1 Cor. xiii.

"Speak unto all the people of the land, and to
 "the priests, saying, when ye fasted and mourned,
 "the fifth and seventh month, even these seventy
 "years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me.
 "And when ye did eat and drink, did ye not eat
 "for yourselves and drink for yourselves?" Zech.
 vii. 5. The scribes and pharisees gave much
 alms to the poor, they prayed and fasted often:
 they sat in Moses' seat, and professed to teach the
 people with devotion and zeal; but as they were a
 vain, a covetous, and hypocritical set of men, they
 performed these duties, not with a view to please
 God,

God, nor from a principle of love to his name, but merely to be seen of men, to obtain applause from them, and to accomplish other worldly purposes, to which their hearts were supremely devoted. God indeed permitted them to obtain the ends which they so ardently pursued; but as they were strangers to the love of God, and had no respect to the reward which he bestows, they did not receive it; on the contrary, our Lord denounced against them many dreadful woes. Matth. viith and xxiiid chapters.

It is clear then as the light, that though you understood all languages in the world, and possessed all the knowledge which these convey; though you should surpass all men, in ancient or modern times, in the powers of eloquence; though you should perform good deeds without number, and, in your affectation of zeal for religion, expose yourself to many evils, or even to death; if you are destitute of love to God, and, therefore, of love to men, all these acquirements, and seemingly pious deeds, will be lost to you, they will avail you nothing; being thus excluded from all friendly intercourse with God, you will remain a melancholy monument of his disapprobation and anger.

With what hope or confidence can you, either in private or public, pray to God, whose displeasure you have incurred, and to whom, you are conscious, your heart is averse?

With what countenance, or with what heart, can you recommend to your hearers the love of God, whom you yourself do not love? Or faith in the Redeemer, in whom you do not believe? Or

C

love

love to one another, and the other Christian duties, which you do not practise?

If God were for you, who could be against you? But as he is against you, who, or what can be for you? You will be left an helpless prey to an innumerable host of foes, of which the most formidable and cruel will be those of your own bosom.

As no service then, however laudable in appearance, can, without the heart, or without love, be acceptable or pleasing to God; neither can it generally be profitable to men. It is very difficult, or even impossible, to carry on a long train of deceit, without affording, now and then, opportunities of detection; which opportunities, mankind, being + much more capable than is commonly supposed of distinguishing what is assumed and forced from what is genuine and natural, are always ready to catch, and to interpret to your disadvantage. The general study of all men is to know the hearts; that is, the real views and dispositions of their fellow-men, especially of ministers: and it is only upon the supposition that their views are proper, and their dispositions good, that they hearken to their instructions, and follow their directions. But a discovery that all is not sound within, will produce opposite effects.

Accordingly, if your private conduct, being uniformly proper and becoming; if your heart, warmed with love to God, and moved with compassion and benevolence to men, shall render your tongue eloquent in preaching the gospel; your hearers, convinced of the sincerity of your profession, will
hang

hang upon your lips, listen to your instructions, and receive real edification.

But if your heart be unconcerned, your addresses to the people will be cold and languid; many will be lulled asleep, and the rest will continue awake merely to make observations little to your advantage. Thus many, by your means, will be offended and stumble; and our Lord says, "Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." Besides, you are not to suppose, that God will bless with success the labours of the man who is estranged from him, equally with his, whose heart is right with him, and stedfast in his covenant. And although some should reap profit by your ministrations; as this, with respect to you, is merely accidental, and beyond your intention, it can never yield your mind the least joy or satisfaction.

What a life of pain, of jealousy, of suspicion, of distrust, and fear, must that be, which is spent in studying to hide what cannot be concealed; and in the performance of duties, to which the heart is reluctant and utterly averse? And, without repentance, how hopeless must its end be?

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XIX.

Dear Son,

WHAT I have mentioned, in the preceding letter, are not the only effects which the want of piety, or love to God, produces; for when the heart is destitute of this love, the appetites, or pas-

sions, will not fail to assume its place. The passions, which I shall just now mention, and briefly describe, are the immoderate love of sensual pleasure, of worldly honour and wealth. With these are connected, and from these spring, emulation, envy, pride, resentment, and malevolence. Hope and fear also are passions, the influence of which is very extensive, and felt, in some degree, by the heart of every man. When these have for their objects temporal things; like these they are fluctuating and uncertain. The greater the hope, the greater the joy; and the less hope, the greater the fear; and when hope entirely fails, the mind, overwhelmed with fear, sinks into a state of sorrow and despondency.

These passions are to be found in every man's mind. They are mortified, and properly regulated, in the minds of good, but prevalent, to an inordinate degree, in those of bad men. The men of the world are not only fond of pleasure, but of fame, or of the good opinion of those with whom they associate. They are fond of wealth, in order to supply the defects which the love of pleasure creates, and to furnish them with ample means of indulgence. They are fond of procuring friends and admirers. They vie, or contend, with one another for the superiority in their respective pursuits. When their rivals surpass, or approach towards them in the pursuit, they are sorry, try every method, and use every effort, to humble and bring them down to a level with themselves, or to a state even inferior to their own.

Here their hopes and fears vibrate, ascend or descend,

descend, in proportion to their success or disappointment.

If they succeed, they are elated with pride, and despise others; or if they are disappointed, and their hopes are blasted; or if they suppose that they have, in any respect, been injured, or treated unjustly, they are fired with anger or resentment; or if they are unable to gratify this passion to the degree they wish, it degenerates into malevolence, or ill-will.

In 1 Tim. iii. and Titus i. we see, that it is required of a bishop, or a minister, that he be "sober, not given to wine, not covetous, or greedy of filthy lucre; not self-willed, not soon angry, sober, just, holy, temperate." "Some indeed," says Paul, "preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will; the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel," Philip. i. 15. That is, probably, while some, animated with love to Christ, to the apostle, to other Christians, and to mankind, preached the gospel; others, stung with envy on account of the apostle's singular success and increasing popularity, in order to humble, to vex his mind, to hurt his fame, and to raise their own upon the ruins of his, exerted themselves in preaching the gospel of Christ! It appears then, that even in the apostolic age, ambition, jealousy, envy, strife, and other hateful passions, had infected the minds of some who professed to preach Christ, and recommend his salvation. There is too much

reason to fear, that that spirit is not yet quite extinguished.

At the same time it is to be observed, that though all these passions affect, in some degree, the hearts of all men, especially the hearts of worldly men; some one of them, by whatever means, gains the ascendant, and becomes predominant in each of their minds.

This predominant passion, having been indulged for a while, acquires strength by degrees, and at length becomes too powerful to be resisted or vanquished by human power. How great is the force of habit; and how dreadful the slavery which evil habits create! "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots; then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil," Jer. xiii. 23. Thus your ruling passion, if unhappily you allow any to usurp the governing power, will insinuate itself into all your views, your purposes, and actions; it will infect your imagination, your memory, your reason, your affections, and all the powers of your nature, and become as it were a part of yourself. Wherever you go, there it will go. If you travel abroad, or even to the ends of the earth, it will accompany each of your steps*; and wherever you take up your residence, there it will abide. When you are employed in secret prayer (if you ever pray in secret), or in scenes more open to view; when you visit the chambers of the sick, and when you appear in public, performing the most sacred functions of your office, it will be intimately present, and will shew its power by its

* Coelum, non animum mutant, qui trans more currant. HOR.

its operations, by diverting your mind, by withdrawing your attention from the object you pretend to have in view; and by alienating your heart from God, whom you profess to worship. Thus, by the influence of your ruling passion, you will be constrained to appear, like Satan, among the sons of God! your prayers will become sin, and your very best services as strange fire, which God abhors, and for which he will be avenged.

And thus, that which might have yielded to your mind the sublimest joy, and the most substantial pleasure, I mean the performance of your duty, will become a source of the most exquisite pain and sorrow. Or when you compare yourself with your pious neighbours, who, you have reason to believe, worship God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth; who perform all their duties from a principle of love and devotion, and therefore with unspeakable pleasure, to which, as you are void of devotion, you must be an utter stranger; how afflicting to your mind, must be the comparison!

How often will you wish, but by the force of your habit wish in vain, that you were disposed as they are, and that your soul were in their soul's stead! "Behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit," Isa. lxxv. 13. "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand,

“to tread my courts?” Isa. i. 12. “What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or that thou should take my covenant in thy mouth?” Psal. l. 16.

Add to this, that by the force of evil habits, or the prevalence of corrupt passion, your repentance, or return to God, will be rendered very difficult, and, with respect to created power, impracticable. Every man who has any idea of God (and all men have some idea, however false), of his dependance, of his obligations, and accountableness, must naturally wish to enjoy his friendship, or to be in a state of favour with him. Now, though this should be your desire, by the influence of your ruling passion, a cloud, tinged with the colours peculiar to that passion, will be interposed between him and you, through which you will see him, not as he really is, but with a character degraded, and adapted to your depraved taste.

Since, like other sinners, you are not disposed to ascend towards God, nor to act according to the standard which he hath fixed, nor to the character of himself which he hath revealed; you will bring him down, in your imagination, to a level with your own. If you are covetous, or envious, or unjust, or lascivious, or ambitious, or malevolent; you will flatter yourself, either that God will not see or regard, or that he has no great aversion to your conduct, or that, in some degree, he resembles yourself. Thus you will attempt to procure for yourself some portion of ease, which will prove but temporary, fallacious, and of short duration.

Thus the heathen, perhaps universally, represented

sentent their gods as endowed with the same passions, and invested with the same character with themselves; and thus God complains of sinners, among his ancient people, "When thou sawest a
 " thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast
 " been partaker with adulterers; thou givest thy
 " mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit;
 " thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou
 " slanderest thine own mother's son. These things
 " thou hast done, and I kept silence; thou *thought-*
 " *est that I was altogether such a one as thyself:* but
 " I will reprove thee, and set them in order before
 " thine eyes," Psal. l. 18.

If then your views of God are false, if you flatter yourself that you are already like him, How can you improve; how can you break your chains, and regain the liberty which you have lost? Your bands will grow daily stronger, and no slavery will be comparable to yours.

The man who is doomed to labour hard from morning to evening, and to fare meanly; the slave who is chained to the oar, or condemned to dig through life in the mine, and never to see the light of the sun, is in a state inconceivably happier than yours. Whatever methods you can employ to heal your disease, to soothe your pains, or procure rest in your course of sin, they will prove deceitful and vain. Your conscience, if it is not quite seared and benumbed, will, with its accusations and remonstrances, often alarm your fears, and interrupt your peace. Conscience, the deputy of God, having, for the rule of its judgments and decisions, his word, or law; when it tries, by that

standard, your thoughts, your views, your temper, and conduct, how many defects in duty, and how many transgressions of the law, must it discover ! And how many sources will it open to your mind of self-accusation, of self-reproach, and self-torment ! And can any man be more miserable than a self-tormentor ? While conscience urges one way, and your passions, more persuasive and powerful, another, where can there be any room for peace ? On the contrary, how immense must be your misery ! Although you should perceive what right and duty is, your passions, strengthened by habit, will not allow you to pursue it, your efforts for reformation will become, by degrees, feeble and languid ; the weaker and more unsuccessful your attempts, the less will be your hope ; the less your hope, the greater will be your fear of approaching misery ; and when your mind becomes a prey to despondency and fear, how wretched must it be !

All things around being cloudy, dark and turbid, what a burden must life be ! How awful the prospect of death ! And how dreadful the anticipation of the judgment to follow ! “ If our heart
* “ condemns us, saith the apostle, God is greater
“ than our heart, and knoweth all things.” How much more will he, in confirmation of the judgment of conscience, his deputy, condemn also ? Compared with yours, being a preacher, or minister of the gospel, the misery of any other sinner among mankind will be much more tolerable.

My dear Son, let the consideration of these things, render you vigilant, and attentive to your thoughts, your principles, and dispositions, that you
may

may escape these evils, and lay hold of eternal life. The means by which this may be effected are,

1. The word of God. Let this be the subject of your frequent study and serious meditation. Thus when in his word, as in a glass, you behold the glory of God, you will be changed into the same image with him: "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." Psal. cxix. 9.

2. The society of good men, by whose conversation and example your mind will be enlightened, and your heart bettered and improved. Thus you will be disposed to avoid the society of the unprincipled and the bad, whose conversation and manners tend to corrupt, and destroy: "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

3. Frequent and serious self-inspection, and self-recollection. I do not know if you keep a regular diary for recording the daily occurrences of your life, and the various workings of your heart. This you will find a most profitable exercise; and, should it happen that you are so busy, as not to have time to insert something daily in this important register, let me advise you, at least, to take time for it every Sabbath evening. Review your conduct through the preceding week; consider wherein you have failed, and wherein you have been enabled to act with propriety. Write down the observations that occur; and, looking up to God for strength, resolve to improve, as you ought,
your

your time, your talents, and opportunities, through the week on which you have entered. The lives of good men, (such as those, Halyburton, Doddridge, Frazer of Brae, Ph. Henry, Col. Gardner, Howard, and Jonathan Edwards), will furnish you with excellent directions and examples on this head.

4. The perusal of pious authors on practical subjects. This is a species of reading, which, I fear, is too much neglected by students of divinity. It is, however, one of the most important. And I would advise you, most religiously to devote your hours of reading, on the Lord's day, to books of this kind. Let the Sabbath be a day of rest from the labours of study; and let all the time you have to yourself, before and after public worship, be employed in devotional exercises, and in reading, with a view to the culture of the heart*.

5. To all these add many fervent prayers to that gracious God who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.

I remain, &c.

* We have many excellent books of this kind, such as Venn's duty of man, Walker of Truro's Christian, and his purifier; Brown, Watts, and Henry on prayer.—Bennet's Christian oratory; Doddridge's practical works; Scudder's daily walk; Henry, Earle, and Haweis on the Lord's supper; Edwards on religious affections; Guthrie's trial of a saving interest in Christ; Mede's almost Christian; Owen on indwelling sin, on mortification, on temptation, on spiritual mindedness, and on communion with God; Wright and Witherspoon on regeneration; Newton's letters; sermons by Walker, Witherspoon, Stennet, Evans, Romaine.

LET.

LETTER XX.

Dear Son,

I NOW proceed to a more pleasant task; namely, to enumerate and explain some of the effects which devotion, or love to God and the Saviour, naturally produces. Love is the chief of all the graces. That pure and heavenly flame proceeds from God, the glorious and inexhaustible principle of it. When, by the means already mentioned, this amiable grace is infused into your heart, it will, by its pleasant and irresistible power, attract it to God, its author. When you thus begin to love him, you begin to live, and to be happy; and, as he is infinitely perfect and amiable, your admiration and your love will be always increasing, and your happiness boundless and everlasting. By loving God, you will be disposed to love fervently all who resemble him; to feel for, and shew benevolence to all men, who are his rational creatures; and to contemplate, with admiration, all his works: "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments," 1 John v. 1. If the exercise of love to one amiable object, produces a certain degree of happiness, how great must be your happiness, when your love comprehends in its embrace so great a number! Good angels, more than the best of men, resemble God. In proportion therefore as their characters are brought to light by revelation, they will be also objects of
your

your affection; and thus the sphere of your love, and your happiness, will be enlarged.

"We are come unto mount Zion, unto the city
"of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and
"to an innumerable company of angels," Heb.
xii. 22.

Again, by loving God you become like to him; and as he loves himself supremely, having nothing more excellent to love, he will also love those who resemble him. By this means, a connection will take place, and a communication be established, to you highly honourable and beneficial.

"I love them that love me, and those that seek
"me early shall find me," Prov. viii. 17. "I have
"loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore
"with loving kindness have I drawn thee," Jer.
xxxi. 3. "The Lord thy God, in the midst of thee,
"is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over thee
"with joy, he will rest in his love, he will rejoice
"over thee with singing," Zeph. iii. 17. "He that
"hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he
"it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall
"be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and
"will manifest myself to him: if a man love me,
"he will keep my words, and my Father will love
"him; and we will come unto him, and make our
"abode with him," John xiv. 21, 23. "If we
"walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have
"fellowship one with another, and the blood of Je-
"sus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin,"
1 John i. 7. "God is love; and he that dwelleth
"in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him,"

1 John iv. 16.

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As God thus loves you, you will be loved by all his children and friends ; not only by those who are within the sphere of your immediate knowledge or acquaintance, but by those also whom you have never seen. " To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints : with all that in every place, call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours, grace be unto you," 1 Cor. i. 2. " I would that ye knew how great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh," Col. iii. 1. You will then be the object of love to all your brethren, of whatever nation, or language, or colour they may be, throughout the world. For you they will pray, and your best interest they will be solicitous to promote.

" There is no man, that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold ; now in this time, houses, brethren, sisters, mothers, and children, and lands, with persecution ; and in the world to come eternal life," Mark x. 29, 30. that is, probably, they who, in love to Christ, or for his sake, leave or renounce their all in this world, shall, wherever they go, and wherever the gospel is believed, and love by its means infused into the hearts of men, receive all the accommodation and support which they may need, or perhaps even desire, together with the tender affectionate love and friendship of brethren and sisters, of fathers and mothers, of wives and children, whereby, in proportion

portion to the number of Christians thus disposed, they will be repaid an hundred fold (a definite for an indefinite number, perhaps many hundred fold) for the losses they have sustained. How interesting, how delightful a view does this passage afford us of the kindness and generosity of our blessed Saviour, and of the love and sublime happiness of all his friends !

Even good angels, these benevolent beings, are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. Not only so, but evil angels and wicked men, were, by their original constitution, disposed to love and to befriend you; for they were at first made upright, and they are now miserable because they have deviated from the original standard of obedience, and of love. In a word, all the other creatures, of every inferior order, whether animate or inanimate, because of your connection with their Creator and Lord, are in a state of friendship with you, and made to promote your interest and your happiness: "Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee," Job v. 23. Hosea ii. 18. How grand and interesting are the views which this subject opens to our mind!—of the security, of the peace and joy of all the disciples of Christ: of God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, with all the good and amiable through the universe, united by the bond of love, which can never be dissolved; of God, the ruler of all, infinitely perfect, and the fountain of all good, dispensing, with a liberal hand, love and happiness; and of good angels, and of the redeemed

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ed from among men, not only loving one another, but, by their gratitude, their love, their praise, and obedience, making to God the best returns they can : Views by which the mind is expanded, elevated, and rendered happy.

The well-grounded belief, that you are of the number of these happy men, and connected with all the righteous and amiable throughout the universe, must inspire your heart with gratitude and admiration, and fill you with joy unspeakable. From this account, you are not to conclude that you will meet with no enemy, whether external or internal, in this world ; or that your happiness, while you remain in the present state, will be complete : For here we know only in part, and see but through a glass darkly : " The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; so that " we cannot do the things," nor attain to the degree of perfection, " that we would." " We wrestle " not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, and the rulers of the darknesses of this world," &c. Ephes. vi. " If the " world hate you, you know that it hated me," said our Lord, " before it hated you." The ground of your hope and comfort is, that he that is on your side is greater, and more mighty than all that are against you ; that your old man will gradually decay, and the new man grow stronger by degrees ; that God will make all things to work together for your good ; bruise Satan under your feet shortly ; and, by enabling you to continue faithful to the death, will bring you to the enjoyment of a crown of life. Having these hopes, and animated
with

with this love, how many, and how sweet will be your meditations of God ! How pleasant to your taste all his words of truth ! And, by communion with him in prayer, and in the ordinances of the gospel, how great will be your happiness ! You will not need to be dragged, with a reluctant mind, nor determined by low and unworthy motives, to visit the sick, or preach the gospel to your hearers. Your heart, melted into compassion, warmed with devotion, and inspired with love, will not only accompany you in, but prompt you to the performance of all your duties ; and your desires of doing good will far exceed the limits of your power. When your heart is thus engaged in your duty, and condemns you not, having confidence towards God, how great must be your felicity !

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XXI.

Dear Son,

WHEN devotion and love to a supreme degree thus occupy your heart, they will abstract it from the undue influence and tyranny of unruly passions, and leave little room for their degrading and painful operations. It is much easier, you may believe, to prevent their usurpation of power, than it will be afterwards to deprive them of it. When you set out in the path of temperance, of righteousness and piety, the practice of these graces will grow into an habit. By repeated practice, the

habit

habit will acquire more and more strength; and the more active you are, the sooner will this end be accomplished, or this habit be confirmed and brought nearer to perfection. And the stronger the habit, with the greater facility you will act, until, at length, the performance of the various duties will be as easy as if it had been natural, and as if you had had no bias to a contrary course.

What a blessing to you will be good habits early acquired!—Habits favourable to temperance, to goodness, and devotion. What a boundless prospect of endless delight, will these open to your mind! Your good habits will prevent the growth and misery of bad ones. Under the influence of good habits, with what pleasure will you read and meditate on the word of God, administer comfort to the afflicted, reprove, rebuke, and impart instruction, both in private and public? compared with the state of the man whose heart is enslaved by evil habits, who can perform no duty but with reluctance and aversion, without love, without hope or satisfaction; daily haunted with the melancholy apprehensions of a future reckoning, and of the misery that will follow. How happy must be your condition, whose mind, by the power of good habits, and by the influence of heaven, is set at liberty; whose heart, inspired by love, accompanies you, and is engaged in every duty which you can perform; “while, with increasing hope and joy, you press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord!” How happy will you be in yourself, and how great a blessing to others! How godlike, diffusing light
and

and peace, and happiness, among all around you ! How comfortable will be your anticipations of the happiness and glory which shall be revealed ! Thus your light will be gradually increased, your faith confirmed, your hope strengthened, and your love rendered more and more ardent, till you see what you now only believe, and enjoy what you now expect ; and mortality be swallowed up of life.

Another effect of pious and good dispositions of heart, will be the approbation of your own conscience. Conscience, the faithful and attentive minister of God, is appointed by him to inspect every man's heart,—his views and conduct ; by its remonstrances, and the punishment which it inflicts, to shew wicked men what will be the unhappy end of their evil course ; and thus to alarm them in time, to check, restrain, and lead them to repentance : And, by its applause, and the peace it confers, to grant to Christians a foretaste of the happiness which awaits them, thereby to encourage them to abound in the work of God, and to persevere in well-doing. Under the cognizance of conscience, fall the thoughts, the desires and aversions, the love and hatred of men, and the effects of these, as they appear in their manners and conversations, by all which the law of God is either obeyed or transgressed.

It is to be observed, that as all men have sinned, no man, by any thing he can either do or suffer, can obtain solid peace, or the approbation of his conscience. Till he be reconciled to God by faith in the death of his Son ; till then, he and his conscience can never be reconciled. When God gives to penitent believers

believers marks of reconciliation, the conscience forgives ; when he speaks peace conscience acquiesces, and speaks peace also. When therefore your conscience, upon trial, finds your views and dispositions generally conformable to the will of God, it will, in proportion, approve and commend you.

Between the state of the man whose mind is torn by contending passions, oppressed by the tyranny of vicious habits, and tormented by internal divisions—by war and discord, by remorse and self-reproach ; whose recollection presents almost nothing but violations of the law, omissions of duty, or services performed without love, and under the influence of unworthy motives, and whose prospect is shut up with blackness, and darkness, and tempest ; and who, the nearer he approaches his end, finds his horror and misery increasing,—and yours, whose heart has been sprinkled by the precious blood of Christ from an evil conscience, and your conscience kept generally void of offence, both towards God and towards men ; in whose mind reign unity, order, harmony, and peace ; and who, the further you advance, and the greater progress you make in devotion, in righteousness, goodness, and self-government, will hear the applause of your conscience becoming more and more loud, perceptible and pleasant, until it be seconded and confirmed by the sentence and approbation of him who will judge righteously ; which will communicate, at once, honour to you unspeakable, and happiness everlasting—How immense will be the difference ! “ Well done, good and faithful servant, “ enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” “ Our rejoicing

"joicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, "that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with "fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have "had our conversation in the world," 2 Cor. i. 12. My Dear Son, that this may be your happy condition is the earnest prayer of your affectionate Father.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXII.

Dear Son,

HAVING, in the course of my correspondence with you hitherto, endeavoured to describe, in some measure, the qualifications which relate to your understanding, or mind, and those which regard your heart; which are necessary, in order to your being a successful and a happy teacher,

I now proceed to point out those which relate to your public, or external conduct, which will also merit your most serious attention.

If your views, your dispositions, and affections, are such as I have described, and recommended, which I hope will be the case, they will naturally dictate such a manner of life as will be adapted to themselves, and agreeable to the word of God, the infallible rule, both for forming the dispositions of your heart, and for regulating the conduct of your life. At the same time, a general delineation of that manner of life which you ought to study, and at which you ought to aspire, may, in some degree, prove beneficial to you.

There are three objects, which every man, particularly

ticularly every minister, ought to have in his view; and these are, the honour of God, or of the Saviour, the present and future interest of his fellow-men, and his own happiness. These objects will be attained, or these ends accomplished, by the practice of those virtues, which, both as a man and as a preacher, you ought to cultivate; and by the proper performance of those duties which are attached to your office as a minister of the gospel.

With respect to the virtues which you ought to practice, some of them I shall consider in the following order. Temperance, truth, righteousness or justice, humility, goodness, and piety.

With respect to temperance. By this I understand temperance in the most extensive sense of the word,—purity of manners, and moderation in the desire, the use, and the enjoyment of all outward good things.

If by any temptation you shall be betrayed into any omission of the duty, or any violation of the law of temperance; that deviation, or sin, however solicitous you may be to hide it, can hardly be concealed. These sins are for the most part committed in the society, with the knowledge, and perhaps with the participation of some of your confidants, or companions; and whatever appearance of benevolence and friendship they may, in the mean time, put on, some through weakness, some through envy, and some through vanity, or other motives, will, by divulging the matter, betray you, and create to you evils of the most pernicious kind. Thus the evil, which you had reason to dread, will, under the influence of a righteous providence, come upon you.

you. However much the envy, or vanity, of your pretended friends may be gratified, or whatever apology they may make for their conduct, you will receive a wound that can hardly be cured; and be left to reap the fruit of your own folly, and of their breach of confidence. You will lose the countenance of the best, and be exposed to the ridicule, to the contempt and insults of the worst part of your society.

Although good men may, upon the supposition of your repentance, forgive, and receive you into favour; others, who are the greatest number, will never forget, nor pardon your fault, and upon very improper occasions will put you in mind of it. This will depress your spirits, discourage your mind, and deprive you, through life, of that confidence which is necessary, in order to the proper and successful performance of your duty, either in preaching the gospel or in reproving offenders.

You will be tempted to handle the word of God deceitfully, either by omitting, or slightly treating those subjects which relate to your own infirmity; conscious, perhaps, that some might say to you, "Physician cure thyself."

Turpe est doctori, cum culpa redarguit ipsum.

You will be tempted, in order to gain favour, or accomplish your own ends, to descend below the dignity of your station; to use gentleness, where severity is necessary; to pass over faults which deserve reproof; and to flatter those who deserve no respect. And, notwithstanding all these artifices,

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transgressors will be multiplied, and vice rendered triumphant. The wicked walk on every side, when vile men, or men reputed vile, are high in place. "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation," or ought to be in reputation, "for wisdom and honour," Eccl. x. "You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost his savour wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men." Matth. v. 13.

"Thou art inexcusable, O man! whosoever thou art, that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things; thinkest thou that thou shalt escape the judgement of God?" Rom. ii. 1. 3

Moreover, he (the Bishop or Pastor) must have "a good report of them which are without, lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil," 1 Tim. iii. 7. *i. e.* perhaps, by reproach, according to the intention, and under the influence of the adversary, the man will be provoked to hate those whom he supposes to be the authors of it. He will murmur against God, under whose government this evil hath happened; will have recourse to intemperance, as a mean of consolation, and thereby become impudent, and hardened in his evil course. Or, by means of reproach his mind will be discouraged, and faint under his trial; and, when deprived of hope, become a prey to every temptation. Thus his labours in the gospel will be

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rendered

rendered fruitless, or of none effect. This is the snare in which he, and others in a state similar to his, are caught, from which they are seldom able to extricate themselves. Thus God is dishonoured, the best interests of those committed to their charge are neglected or injured, and their own peace destroyed.

Whereas, if you set out with purity of manners, and persevere in that course, your character will acquire a dignity and amiableness, (the other parts of your behaviour corresponding) which will engage the hearts of the best part of your hearers, and beget awe in the minds of the worst. Your instructions will be received without prejudice, and yield the most pleasant fruits. You will reprove, rebuke, and exhort; and being in a manner invulnerable, none will presume to hurt or despise you. Thus many souls will be edified, God glorified, and the peace of your own mind daily increased.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

Dear Son,

WITH respect to truth. Truth, like every other grace, is of a delicate nature, and therefore easily hurt. If you accustom yourself to use freedoms with truth, or to deviate from it in lighter or more trivial cases, which in the eyes of the world will perhaps appear to be venial, and do no hurt to
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your character; like an habitual swearer, you will be insensibly betrayed into more serious deviations. You will perhaps praise a man to his face, and traduce him behind his back. In one of which cases you must have uttered a lie, or spoken what you did not think, or what you knew to be false. You will by one lie endeavour to hide the deformity of another, or to cover your defects, whatever they may be, or to promote your secular interest, or to render successful the cause or the party which you have espoused. And if you shall be once detected in a lie, especially in a case of importance, much more if you shall be often detected, wherever your name is known, fame will publish your defects, and make an impression to your disadvantage which cannot be effaced.

What security can any man who knows your weakness, when he hears you, have, that you are speaking truth, unless he can, by other means beside your information, be ascertained of it? You will thus, like a member lopped off from the body of society, become useless, and an object of contempt. What benefit, in this case, can mankind reap from your instructions? How can you recommend truth to them, when you yourself despise it? Are private Christians bound not to lie, but to speak every man the truth with his neighbour; and shall a preacher of truth be freed from that obligation? Thou that preacheest that a man should not lie, dost thou thyself lie? The same evil consequences, with these mentioned in the preceding article, will follow the neglect or violation of truth.

On the other hand, if your adherence to truth be strict and uniform, it will give a lustre to your name, and a force to your instructions, which will produce the most pleasant and salutary effects.

With regard to justice, or righteousness. This virtue I shall consider in the most restricted sense, as relating to your intercourse with mankind. Should you in any flagrant instance, much more in many, impose upon a simple ignorant man, and give him much less than the purchase you have made is worth; or take from him, for the purchase he hath made, much more than its value, or than justice will admit; should you, in your general commerce with mankind, not only adventure near the bounds of right or wrong, but, as opportunity offers, overleap or transgress them, you will betray a worldly spirit, and a greediness of filthy lucre, which, in a Christian pastor, the spirit of the apostle utterly condemns. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." With what countenance can you exhort your hearers to set their affections on things above, for which you yourself have no regard? Or advise them not to set their hearts on things upon the earth, to which your heart is entirely devoted? And what influence can your best counsels have upon your hearers, when they know that your own practice contradicts them? But, if the love of righteousness be one of the animating principles of your life, and appear uniformly in every part of your conduct, it will be to you an ornament of grace, render your name venerable, and contribute greatly to the success of your ministerial labours.

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The apostle, having spoken of the love of money, and of the evils which result from it, adds, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness," &c. 1 Tim. vi. 11. "He that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous."

Humility is another virtue by which the life of a Christian pastor ought to be distinguished. Although humility is not an active virtue, yet it is necessary, in order to the existence and growth of all the rest. It is the field in which they spring, the soil in which they flourish and bring forth much good fruit. Without it, the virtues would vanish, and leave nothing but a shadow behind them.

Humility requires of men no sacrifice but what is proper, reasonable, and beneficial; or a renunciation of no right which they can justly claim. It only requires, that they should not think more highly of themselves than they ought to think; but that they should think of themselves, as they truly are, as absolutely dependant, as men who have sinned, and are yet called by the gospel to entertain good hope through grace; for without hope there will be despondency, but there can be no humility; and if they thus think of themselves, they will think soberly indeed.

Connected with humility are meekness and patience; by meekness, you will escape the sudden gusts of anger, or be able to resist them, and be secured from all the evils of an irritable temper, by which the minds of many are shaken and convulsed, and the peace of society often interrupted.

By patience, you will be able to bear, with calmness, with composure and self-possession, the evils and trials of life, to which every man is liable; and of which every minister has his particular share. It is required of a bishop, that he be not soon angry, and no striker. Titus i. "That he be "patient, not a brawler," 1 Tim. iii. "O man "of God;" saith the apostle, "flee these things" and, among other virtues, "follow after patience "and meekness," Chap. vi. 11. "Be ye clothed "with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5. Opposed to humility, and its attendant graces, are pride and vanity. By the influence of pride, you will suppose yourself to be in a great measure independent and self-sufficient; and thus be led to look down, from your imaginary eminence, upon others, and to undervalue and despise them, as unworthy of your regard.

Pride is the offspring of ignorance; it renders every man who is governed by it, and particularly every man who preaches or recommends humility to others, at once despicable and odious, and is the forerunner of a dreadful fall. "Pride goeth "before destruction, and an haughty spirit before "a fall." Prov. xvi. 18. The apostle says, that a "Bishop should not be a novice; lest, being puffed "up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of "the devil," 1 Tim. iii. 6. Lest, by imitating the devil in pride, he share in his condemnation. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the "humble," 1 Pet. v. 5. As the man of pride is a man of contention and war, every hand will be armed against him, and thousands rejoice at his fall.

fall. How hateful an object then must a proud priest be, both to God and to men?

With humility are very consistent courage and fortitude,—courage in asserting and defending the truth; and fortitude in bearing the hardships and evils to which the friends of truth are exposed. Of these graces, the lives of our Saviour and of his apostles, (although none were more humble than they) afford the most illustrious examples.

✱ If vanity possess your mind, you will cringe and flatter; you will read, write, and study hard; you will pray and preach, and perform the various functions of your office, merely to make a shew before men; to recommend yourself to their favour, and gain their applause. How contemptible, how disingenuous and impious a part will you act, when you pray, in appearance, to God, and recommend to your hearers the Saviour, as their supreme good, while, in the mean time, your real intention is to substitute yourself in his place, and to attract to yourself the whole, or the greatest part of the praise which is due to him alone! No passion defeats its own purpose more effectually than vanity; for in proportion as you shew an inclination to be exalted and praised, in the same proportion mankind will be disposed to humble you, and to render abortive all your attempts.

How greatly are we disappointed and hurt with the exhibitions of men whom we know to be conceited and vain?

Their words prove empty as wind, and their best exertions vanish into air. Whereas we accompany the humble man with the greatest pleasure;

By patience, you will be able to bear, with calmness, with composure and self-possession, the evils and trials of life, to which every man is liable; and of which every minister has his particular share. It is required of a bishop, that he be not soon angry, and no striker. Titus i. "That he be patient, not a brawler," 1 Tim. iii. "O man of God;" saith the apostle, "flee these things" and, among other virtues, "follow after patience and meekness," Chap. vi. 11. "Be ye clothed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5. Opposed to humility, and its attendant graces, are pride and vanity. By the influence of pride, you will suppose yourself to be in a great measure independent and self-sufficient; and thus be led to look down, from your imaginary eminence, upon others, and to undervalue and despise them, as unworthy of your regard.

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sure; his words sink deep, and operate powerfully upon our hearts; and the more humble he is, and the more self-denied, the more we praise, and the more we wish to exalt him. Such is the appointment of God, and such the disposition of men!

It will perhaps be said, that the Scribes and Pharisees, who prayed and fasted often, and gave much alms to the poor, merely to be seen of men, although vain and self-conceited, according to the testimony of our Lord, received their reward; that is, the praise which they so fondly pursued. But the passage now referred to, Matth. vi. is by no means inconsistent with the account which I have given. For these men had distinguished their views with so much art, and concealed their principles under a veil so thick, that the simple ignorant multitude, unable to judge of their true character, deceived by appearances, bestowed the praise, or the reward which they were so ambitious to obtain.

But when our Saviour detected their fraud, and exposed their characters to the public view, they became, in the eyes of all men of any discernment or feeling, and will continue to be, objects of contempt and aversion; and so must all be, when discovered, who, in any degree, follow their example.

Our Lord, in his humility and self-denial, sought not his own glory; and now how precious is his name among all his saints! And how great the glory to which he is advanced! John viii. 50. The apostle Paul, and his brethren, "preached not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord," 2 Cor. iv. 5. and now they enjoy the crown prepared for them

them in heaven; and their names will be transmitted, with honour, through all generations. How worthy are these examples of your imitation; and how happy are they who faithfully copy after them !

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XXIV.

Dear Son,

PERMIT me, in the next place, to suggest a few remarks upon charity, or goodness. The nature, indeed, of this amiable virtue is so plain and obvious, that it will need little explanation. This grace of goodness will dispose you to communicate to those who need what your circumstances will permit, or what it is in your power to bestow,—food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, knowledge to the ignorant, counsel to the foolish, reproof to transgressors, and comfort to the afflicted.

The most remarkable branches, or modifications, of this virtue are, love and compassion. If you are inspired with this grace, you will love good men, (which, according to the testimony of the apostle, is one mark of a good bishop), shew benevolence to all ; commiserate the state of the afflicted, whatever be the cause of their distress ; “ Rejoice “ with them that rejoice, and weep with those that “ weep.”

You will be disposed, according to our Lord's

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direction,

direction, "to love even your enemies, to do good
"to them who hate you, to bless them who curse
"you, and to pray for them who despitefully use
"you, and persecute you." You will thus be like
your Father in heaven, "who is good to all, and
"whose mercy extendeth unto the heavens: who
"maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and the
"good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the un-
"just."

The great object of this sublime virtue, in all its parts, is the removal of misery, and the communication of happiness. Animated, therefore, with the spirit of charity and goodness, you will enjoy the honour, even in this world, of resembling your Father in heaven; "and at last be perfect, even as he is perfect."

Opposed to this virtue is envy, with the other malevolent passions connected with it. Mankind were originally inspired with a desire to excel in every thing amiable and praise-worthy; to rejoice, at the same time, each in his neighbour's success, and by no means to throw impediments in his way, or to be grieved at his progress, or his happiness: and thus this virtuous and laudable emulation was designed to lead men to the highest improvement in goodness and in happiness.

But when, by the introduction of sin, their minds were blinded, and the things of this world appeared to be the most excellent, the supreme good; then the contest began, and still continues to be, who shall obtain the greatest share of wealth, or of pleasure, or the highest degree of honour. Nor are they scrupulous, or nice, in the choice of
means

means for accomplishing their end. Every man, according to his taste, or the mode of his education, strives eagerly to be first in learning, in wealth, in honour, or pleasure; sorry when he sees another about to overtake or surpass him: and, in this case, he tries every expedient, however unjustifiable, to humble, to perplex, and disappoint him. Thus virtuous, generous emulation, is converted into hellish envy; than which no passion renders a man, both in point of moral deformity and of misery, liker the devil.

If then, when you yourself observe, or learn from others, that your neighbour is more learned, a better preacher, a more laborious, and more successful and popular minister than yourself, you are sorry, and try, in a most ungenerous manner, by traducing his character, and hurting his success, to weaken his hands and discourage his mind, you are the man of envy, whose character I have attempted to describe: and to any man, much more to a minister of the gospel, how great a disgrace must such an infernal passion be! With what grace, with what conscience, can you recommend to others, the generosity, benevolence, and goodness, to which your own heart is an utter stranger; or exclaim against envy and malevolence, by which you are so much enslaved!

If you are disappointed in your attempts against your neighbour, if he continues to shine, and to prosper; your envy will degenerate into hatred and ill-will,—the very picture of Satan, and the prelude to you of hell, if you repent not. May God

deliver you, and all of your profession, from the dominion of a passion, so malignant and so pernicious.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XXV.

Dear Son,

PIETY, or devotion, is a grace which has an immediate respect to God, and is superior to all others. Among these it sits as queen; with her dress they are attired, and with her spirit they are animated. Without piety, all the virtues are lifeless, insipid, unsubstantial, and uninteresting.

From various motives, men may be temperate in their enjoyments, just in their dealings, and true in their intercourse with mankind. They may act in this manner, in order to save their money, to preserve their reputation, to promote their secular interest, or avoid the evils to which, by a contrary conduct, they would be exposed. They may, by performing deeds of kindness to others, gratify their natural compassion, or humanity, and acquire to themselves the name of kind and beneficent men, and yet be destitute of piety; without which there will remain a vacuity in their minds, and a defect in their virtues, which nothing else in their power can supply.

When men are known to be void of the fear and love of God, what confidence can any person connected with them, by whatever tie, have in them?

them? What security can he have, that they will continue faithful in secret as well as in public; when absent, as well as when present? That they will continue to love him as they have professed, and perform for him the various duties and good offices, upon which his happiness depends, and which love and real friendship prescribe? On the contrary, has he not reason to suspect, that, uninfluenced by piety, that heavenly principle which ought to direct their minds and govern their hearts, they will yield to surrounding temptations, prove unfaithful, neglect his interest, and frustrate his hopes? And will not his suspicions, be often found to be too well grounded?

Suspicion weakens love; and love enfeebled or extinguished, will dissolve the bands by which friendship is cemented, and the members of society united, or held together.

By the want of piety a character is rendered defective, imperfect, and unamiable. The less the love which such a character inspires, and the less the degree of love, the less union, the less confidence and happiness there must always be.

Without piety, or love to God, no man can love his neighbour as he ought. In that light in which God appears as he is, amiable; and his will, enjoining love to himself and to mankind, just and good; in the same light men, especially good men, appear, to a certain degree, to be objects of love; and that love to them is a duty. Therefore, without devotion, or love to God, the supreme beauty, you cannot love men, who were made after his image. From a principle of natural affection and
humanity,

humanity, or from a regard to your own character, you may shew an attachment to your family and relations, and a certain degree of regard to your neighbours. You may teach them to provide for their own subsistence. You may even contribute to their rising, or making a figure in the world. But what will all this in the end avail, unless proper attention be paid to the interest and happiness of their minds? And, without piety, what attention can you pay to an interest so precious? How can you recommend to them the love of God, whom you do not love! And how can you shew a proper concern for their future happiness, when you feel none for your own? And, without such concern and such attention to your own happiness, and to theirs, and a supreme regard to God the fountain of happiness, how can you love your neighbour as yourself, as the law requires?

Supposing you could, without piety, love your neighbour, and perform all the duties dictated by love, which I have shewn you cannot; where is that affection for God, which he originally planted in your bosom, and designed to superintend and direct all your other affections and appetites, and to infuse into your heart the highest degree of happiness? If it remains neglected, torpid and inactive, how mutilated, how deformed and wretched must your mind be! the grand channel of its supreme felicity being thus obstructed and shut up. In a word, without piety, in some degree, society cannot subsist, nor yield to man, formed for society, the happiness which he fondly desires. Without piety, man is an anomalous, heterogenious,

ous, monstrous kind of being; in his appetites resembling the beasts, in his passions and external form a man, but without the heart or disposition of a man. If you should be in this unhappy condition, from which I pray God to preserve you, how irksome and disagreeable a task must the performance of your duty be! With what coldness, with what indifference and reluctance, must you recommend piety to God, of which you yourself have no feeling! Or love to men whom you do not love! What pleasure can a life without piety yield? And how hopeless will be your future prospects?—On the other hand, if piety be the leading principle of your life, the performance of your duty will be to you a fund of delight. Conversing with God daily, and serving him in the gospel of his Son, you will be “changed into the same image with him.” Life, upon review, will yield you a rich harvest of pleasure. Your services in the gospel will go up as a memorial before God, and descend again in many blessings upon yourself; and, by your means, upon others around you. By piety, the principles and happiness of heaven will be begun in you; your prospects will be glorious, and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, “you will receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away. Godliness, with contentment, is great gain. O man of God, follow thou after righteousness, godliness, faith, love,” 1 Tim. vi. 11*.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

* On the Christian temper and character read Evan's sermons; Watt's Christian Morality; Placette, *Piétés Morale Chrétienne*.

LETTER XXVI.

Dear Son,

I GO on to describe the qualifications of which, as a preacher or minister, you ought to be possessed: And, by way of introduction, shall make a few observations, which hitherto could not be easily introduced. If you are well informed and wise, you will not be apt to boast that you often dine, or are frequently in company, with my Lord, or with Sir such a thing; that he shewed you much respect, and said to you many civil things; for this is a sign of a vain, of a weak, and little mind, which, whatever you may think, will degrade, and render you an object of contempt to all men of taste and discernment. Respect is due to men of rank, especially to those of high life, who fear God; but to cringe, to fawn, and flatter greatness, merely as greatness, as if it were the highest honour, and the only road to happiness, is an indication of a weak judgment, and of a bad taste.

By your learning and piety, by your discretion and prudence, I hope you will acquit yourself in any company, however polite or fashionable, so as to beget no contempt of yourself, nor bring dishonour to the religion which you profess; but, on the contrary, that you will procure esteem and reverence for both.

The right government of your tongue, in order to your peace, your honour, and success in your profession, will be absolutely necessary. "He that keepeth his mouth, and his tongue," saith the wise, man,

man, "keepeth his soul from trouble." If you have a turn for wit, which is generally connected with satire, by all means endeavour to suppress it; or, which will be a difficult task, use it always with humanity, with the strictest delicacy and prudence, or upon great occasions, when it may be employed in order to expose folly and insolence, or to confound impudence and vice. For if, neglecting these cautions, you shall expose the weakness of any person, present or absent, and make him the object of merriment and ridicule, you may indeed create a laugh, and in appearance render yourself entertaining and agreeable; but, besides the resentment of the person whom you have thus treated, to which you are exposed, you may believe, that, however respectable you may appear at a distance, and however agreeable as a companion, when viewed in a nearer light, you must appear as a dangerous man, neither to be trusted nor loved as a friend, but shunned by all wise men, as an object of dread and aversion.

In passing through life, you will observe many men of talents, who might have been highly useful in society, by means of this humour, answering little or no other purpose than that of beacons, erected to warn others to avoid the rock upon which they have suffered shipwreck.

Your humanity and charity will dispose you to throw a veil over the weaknesses and infirmities of mankind, if they can with propriety be concealed. You will not entertain your family and friends with the history of the complaints, of the self-accusations and confessions of the afflicted, whom
you

you may happen to have visited; and you will keep locked up in your breast, and sacred as your life, the secret committed to your trust. You will thus be considered as a father to the afflicted, and the friend of mankind. You will have ready access to their hearts; and have it in your power to do them the most substantial service: Add to this, the satisfaction and applause of your own mind, and, if you act from a proper principle, the approbation of Him in whose favour is life.

You will not be double tongued, saying, in mean compliance with the opposite humours of men, one thing in one company, and the reverse in another; putting on the appearance of friendship to a man, or family, when present, and in their absence joining with their neighbours in exposing their weakness, or in traducing their characters. You will not, by basely repeating to one man what you heard to his disadvantage from another, or to one family what you have heard in a neighbouring one, destroy their friendship, break their peace, and provoke their resentment against one another. For while, by your means, they hate, and take every opportunity to hurt one another, it is one of the least evils you have reason to dread, as the reward of your very unworthy behaviour, that you will become the object of the keenest resentment to both. Lev. xix. 16. "Thou shalt not go up and down, as a tale-bearer among thy people." Prov. xi. 13. "A tale-bearer revealeth the secrets, but he that is of a faithful spirit, concealeth the matter." Chap. xviii. 8. "The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the inner-

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“most parts of the belly.” Chap. xvii. 9. “He that repeateth a matter, separateth very friends.”

As our Lord, when he dwelt among men, did not interfere in the political concerns of his country; as he spent no time in pointing out to the rulers of the world at that time, the properest mode of correcting the errors, or alleviating the burdens of their government; nor in prescribing to his countrymen the best means of relief, or the most proper method of obtaining a redress of their grievances. And as his apostles observed, with the utmost exactness, the same rule, and followed religiously their Master's example in this, as well as in every other case; so you, notwithstanding the change of circumstances, and the alterations which have taken place in society since that time, having more noble objects to pursue, and employment of a more interesting kind, sufficient to engage your whole attention, and occupy all your powers, will not be rash in dipping, or engaging deeply in political contests.

With respect to ecclesiastical politics, that source of so much rancour and malevolence among men who should dwell together in peace, and emulate one another in doing good; as I do not incline to give you positive directions on this head, I shall only observe, that when you have seriously considered the following queries, you will be able to determine what measures you ought generally to pursue.

When you have obtained the charge of a parish, (if that event shall ever happen) or the cure of
souls,

souls, as it is called; could you, with justice or propriety, consider five hundred, or a thousand, or two thousand persons, of whom your parish may consist, to have been made for you, or committed to your care, merely for your sake, to fulfil your pleasure; and, without any judgment, any will or choice of their own, to submit implicitly, in every case, to your dictates, whatever they may happen to be? Had you the inclination and power to enforce your decisions, and to oblige all your hearers to profess precisely the same opinions, what would be the consequence? They would, for the most part, either become hypocrites, or a set of machines, without knowledge, without religion, and without happiness.

If you would not pursue these measures respecting your own hearers; would you adopt them, had you power, with regard to the church at large?

Or, on the other hand, would you not suppose, when ordained a minister, that you have been raised to the state of a Christian pastor for the good of those committed to your inspection? Christ, the chief Shepherd, "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." How great was his gentleness and compassion, and how unspeakable his love! In his care of the flock, and in his condescension to their weaknesses, he was in a most conscientious manner followed by his apostles. The apostle Paul, for instance, as far as duty or conscience would permit, became all things to all men, both to Jews and Gentiles, that he might gain, or save some. "We preach," said he,
"not

“not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and
“ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake*.”

When you have given your voice, once or twice, with those of a certain party, they will expect, that in every future case you will pursue the same course; and should you, in any instance, disappoint their expectation, many of them will consider you as a weak, a fluctuating, unfaithful, a dangerous, and perhaps a hypocritical, man. But as you will find good men on both sides, and that neither party is always in the right, you ought, in every case, to judge for yourself; and when you are satisfied that a cause is just or unjust, well or ill founded, without regard to the opinion, the favour, or disapprobation of men, you will give your voice accordingly. The approbation of your conscience will yield you more satisfaction than the applause of men, and minister the sweetest and most pleasant solace under all their censures.

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XXVII.

Dear Son,

AFTER the observations made, or the directions given you in the preceding letter, I proceed to give you some instructions relating to your conduct, as the pastor of a Christian people. If your head and heart shall be furnished, as I hope they will

* See Jennings on preaching Christ; and Bostwick on preaching not ourselves, but Jesus Christ.

will be, you will invariably pursue the great object of your ministry,—the salvation, or happiness of your people; in which is involved the honour of God and your own comfort and honour.

And how is this end to be obtained, or that happiness secured? By the illumination, or instruction of their minds, and by gaining or attracting their hearts to the love of God, of Christ, and of their duty; and then all other things will be right of course.

The great mean which God hath appointed for this purpose is his word, the perfection and excellency of which I have formerly endeavoured, in some measure, to describe. Of this word, the moral law, which every man is bound to obey, makes an essential part; the explanation of that law, in all its greater and more minute parts, of its connection with God and man, and of its foundation in the nature of both, with a particular application to your hearers, will be absolutely necessary, in order to their proper information*.

1. When, by your accurate and faithful exposition of the law, and by your affectionate address to your hearers, they are induced to examine by it, or to compare with it, their thoughts, their desires and aversions, or attachments and antipathies, their words and actions, to all which the law extends, and of which it takes the cognizance; when they consider how often, in each of these cases, they have offended; how much precious time, they

* For aiding you in attaining just views of the perfections and the law of God, read Bellamy's true religion delineated.

they have devoted to vain pursuits, and how much to bad ones; how many duties they have entirely omitted, and how many they have performed, both to God and men, from low and unsuitable motives, and without that love which would have rendered them pleasing to God and profitable to themselves; and that they have not only failed in the performance of their duty, but in innumerable instances transgressed the law; when they perceive that their sins are thus multiplied, and, by many circumstances, highly aggravated, for which sins, neither they, nor any other creature, are able to make atonement, their consciences must be awakened, and their minds much alarmed. "By the law, is the knowledge of sin; the law worketh wrath."

2. Here, with great propriety, are to be introduced those parts of scripture which relate to Christ the Saviour, to his admirable instructions, his amiable character, the dignity and infinite excellence of his person; the wonderful atonement for sin made by his death, the perfect righteousness he has brought in, by his unspotted obedience, for the justification of the sinner; together with his gracious declarations, kind invitations, and precious promises of pardon and salvation to those, who, accepting his invitation, come to him.

When any one of your hearers, by means of the law and the gospel, clearly explained and powerfully enforced, convinced of the law as a transgressor, and perceiving his danger, is enabled to come to Christ, or believe in his name, he is justified, his sins are pardoned, and peace shed abroad in his heart: "He that believeth shall be saved." "Being

“ing justified by faith, we have peace with God,
 “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” John v. 24.
 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my
 “words, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath
 “everlasting life, and shall not come into con-
 “demnation, but is passed from death unto life.”
 John x. 28, 29. “I give unto them eternal life,
 “and they shall never perish, neither shall any
 “pluck them out of my hand: my Father, which
 “gave them me, is greater than all; and none is
 “able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

3. Since men who believe are thus justified, not in any measure by their own works, but only by the obedience and righteousness of Christ, what obligation are they under in future to observe the law? And what purpose can be answered by their obedience?—In answer to this, you will have an opportunity of shewing, that men, who are enlightened with the knowledge of God and of his Son, of his excellence and amiableness, of his goodness, love, and mercy, who believe, and are renewed in the spirit of their minds, are naturally incited to love him, and all whom he loves. “We love him because he first loved us.” “The love of Christ constraineth us.” “Love is of God, and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.” What man ever knew God, who is the supreme beauty, who did not love him? And what man ever loved God, who did not love his neighbour? “He that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.” “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,” John xiii. 35.

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That is, the disciples of no master on earth, unconnected with Christ, ever learned the heavenly divine lesson of love; and therefore, as he is the only Master who teaches men to love, all who love shew themselves to be his disciples.

Again, who ever loved God and the Saviour, who did not, in proportion to his love, pursue that course, and perform those actions, which love naturally dictates? Or who, in proportion to his knowledge and love, did not cultivate that temper, and perform those works, which God, the supreme object of his love, requires? The more ardently he loves, and the more perfectly he obeys, the more conformable he is to the law: and the more conformable to the law, the liker he is to God, whose image the law is: and the more he resembles, the more he will honour or glorify God: and the more he loves and honours him, the more love he will shew, and the more good he will do to his fellow-men: and the more he abounds in the works of faith, and labours of love, the happier he becomes, and the fitter for heaven, where love and happiness for ever reign.

From what I have now said, it will appear that the law; deliverance from the curse of it by faith in Christ: and the happy effects of this deliverance, discovered by the love and obedience of Christians, who are made new creatures, created in Christ unto good works; are the three great subjects of revelation, to which all the other parts of it refer, and with which they are intimately connected. If you shall make choice, for instance, of the perfections of God, as subjects of discourse; his

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holiness,

holiness, justice, and truth, accompanied by infinite wisdom, and armed with almighty power, must fill the minds of sinners with dread and astonishment ; but his mercy, revealed in the gospel, yields to believers good hope, and fills their hearts with gratitude. Or if you chuse, for topics, the passions and affections of mankind, after describing their nature, their operations, and the ends they were designed to serve, you must point out their depravity, and the vices, or evils, which spring from it, with the means which the gospel prescribes, and the motives which it proposes, in order to their renovation, and their gradual restoration to their former usefulness.

In a word, when you describe the duties which men owe to God, and to one another, you must consider the law, as the great rule of duty ; the law, which not only prescribes the external actions, but also the principles from which they ought to proceed. If these duties are either omitted or improperly performed, the law is violated ; and the law transgressed denounces a curse, from which sinners can be delivered, and the love of their duty restored, only by the grace of the gospel, or by faith in Christ.

It may here be remarked, that when you have explained any part of the law, and pointed out to sinners the terrors of it, as one or more of your hearers may have been convinced as transgressors, you ought not to leave them in a state, for ought you know, of perturbation and trouble, until, at some future period, you chuse to explain the nature and the grace of the gospel : you must immediately

mediately point out to them the remedy of which they stand so much in need.

As time would fail me, should I attempt to enumerate and explain the various articles of this part of your duty, I shall only further observe, in this stage of our correspondence, that if, discerning the harmony of all the parts of the scriptures, their beauty, their excellence, and perfection; and how admirably they are fitted for correcting the errors, and promoting the happiness of mankind: and if, considering the great variety of human passions, humours, and pursuits; and of the moral distempers, with which they are affected, and the need they have of a remedy, you shall wisely adapt your instructions to this variety, and give to every one his portion in due season, you will "approve yourself a workman, who needeth not to be ashamed; "rightly dividing the word of truth."

I remain, Dear Son,

Yours, &c.

LETTER XXVIII.

Dear Son,

I SHALL endeavour, in this epistle, to comprise what further occurs to me relating to your duty as a preacher, and minister of the gospel. If you judge wisely, you will not suppose, after you have studied for a while, however assiduously, the sacred scriptures, that you understand them perfectly, and may therefore devote the remainder of your time and labours chiefly to other studies of inferior

riour moment. For although many parts of scripture are so plain, that persons of ordinary capacity may understand them, and to such a degree as to obtain salvation by means of them ; there are yet, in these very passages, truths, connected with and following one another in succession, removed from the view of common eyes, which will afford scope for your most diligent, your most devout, and pleasant investigation ; and how much more must this be the case with respect to the passages which are more obviously difficult ?

The word of God, like his works, is a great deep, which will admit of endless inquiry, and yield increasing delight, until you see without the medium of the written word, and “ know even as you “ are known.” “ Who can, by searching, find out “ God to perfection ?” The riches of Christ are unsearchable. Eph. iii. 18. “ That ye may be “ able to comprehend with all saints, the breadth “ and length, the depth and height, and to know “ the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” Rom. xi. 33. “ O the depth of the riches, both of “ the wisdom and knowledge of God, how un- “ searchable are his judgments, and his ways past “ finding out !”

The apostle Peter observes, 2 Epistle, iii. 16. that, in the writings of his brother Paul, there are some things hard to be understood.

It is by the truths of the gospel, clearly explained and properly applied, that, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the minds of men are enlightened, delivered from prejudice and the love of sin ; become like to God, the fountain of truth ; and are rendered

rendered completely happy. How much then doth it concern you to propose to them the truth in its simplicity? For should you, through carelessness or prejudice, impart to them, instead of the truths of the gospel, your own indigested and ill-founded opinions, you would turn them out of the road of truth and of happiness. Instead of light, you would infuse darkness; and administer poison in place of wholesome food. The apostle strikingly observes, that the words of certain teachers "do eat as a canker."

If any man under your inspection, through your negligence, perish in his sins; as you omitted to give him warning, God will require his blood at your hand. How awful is the thought! And how powerfully should it incite you to attention, and diligence in the work of the Lord! Ezek. iii. Chap. xxxiv. 10. "Behold I am against the shepherds (that is the careless shepherds), and I will require my flock at their hand."

When you have chosen a passage of scripture, as a subject of discourse, the first thing necessary is to ascertain the meaning of it; this, when accomplished, will give you courage and pleasure in the prosecution of your remaining task. Should you, in place of a sermon, compose and deliver an essay, without any method, or such as your hearers cannot perceive, you might perhaps please yourself, but no man else; for you will be understood by none. When you have discovered the meaning of your text, the next step is to chuse the method, or plan, according to which you intend to illustrate it; and the more natural it

is, and the more moderate (if the subject will permit) the number of your articles, or heads, the more easy and delightful will be your task in the composition, the more clearly will the discourse be understood, and the more easily remembered by the hearers. Your words ought to be, as much as possible, those in common use; so placed in your sentences, and your sentences so connected, that the whole may be luminous, obvious, and inviting to men of every capacity*.

“Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them, or be wholly in these things,” 1 Tim. iv. 15.; let your pastoral duty be the great object of your attention, to which all your other studies and pursuits ought to be made subservient; “that thy profiting may appear unto all,” or in all things.

“Take heed,” saith the apostle, “to thy doctrine;” and let all your studies and labours be accompanied and followed with fervent prayers to God, who alone can open your understanding, that you may understand the scriptures, guide you unto all truth, and crown your labours with success.

Whether you should deliver written or unwritten discourses must be left to your own discretion:

* It will be highly worth your while to read with care Wilkins on preaching; Claude on the composition of a sermon, with Robertson's notes; Cambray on eloquence; or Fordyce on the art of preaching, and eloquence of the pulpit. On the pastoral office in general, I must earnestly recommend to your serious attention, Baxter's reformed pastor; Burnet's pastoral care; and Watts' humble attempt towards the revival of practical religion.

each

each of these modes has its advocates, and those too of great distinction.

By writing, if you compose with care, you will have all your ideas collected, digested, and arranged in their proper order; your mind will remain collected in the delivery, free from hesitation and embarrassment; and, by the simplicity of your plan, and the distinct order preserved through all the parts, your hearers, without any difficulty, will, through the whole, perceive the end which you propose, and easily remember what you have said.

By delivering unwritten discourses, you avoid the pain and drudgery of writing. When you have thoroughly studied your subject, and digested in your mind the different parts; and when you have, by custom, acquired a proper degree of confidence, and of facility of expression, you can preach with much satisfaction to yourself, and edification to your hearers. For, being more unfettered, than in delivering a written discourse, you can catch important ideas, suggested by the occasion, which might not have occurred to your mind when writing in your closet. These you can illustrate and enforce with the greatest advantage: besides, your language, brought down to a level with the capacity of your hearers, will be the more easily understood, command their attention, and affect their hearts. It is to be remarked, that he who would adopt this mode, and pursue it with success, must have a very considerable fund of knowledge, both of the scriptures and of human nature, and he must study his subject, and arrange his ideas, with as much attention as he who writes.

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The surest way of publishing the whole counsel of God is, by a regular course of expounding the scriptures, in what, in Scotland, are called *lectures*. In this way, no doctrine or duty can be wholly omitted. By searching the scriptures, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual, you should endeavour to form a judgment for yourself, concerning the genuine sense or meaning of every passage, before you consult any expositor. But, in this important exercise, you have many excellent helps, in the commentaries, annotations, and paraphrases of learned and pious men. *

To

* On the whole Scripture, I may venture to recommend Henry, Gill, Pool's annotations, and his synopsis criticorum. —For parallel passages, Clerk's family Bible, and Brown's self-interpreting Bible; on the Old Testament, Michalis's notes to his Hebrew bible; on the New Testament, Calvin, Doddridge Guyse, and Wolfii curæ philologicæ. —But you will derive still more advantage, by consulting those who have published expositions of, or annotations on, detached parts of the sacred writings: Such as, on the pentateuch, Ainsworth; on the historical books, Patrick; on the hagiographa, Michaelis; on Job, Schultens; on the psalms, Geierus, Venema, Horne, Molerus; on the proverbs, Schultens, Geierus; on ecclesiastes, Geierus; on the prophets, Lowth, (the Father of the Bishop); on Isaiah, Vitranga, Bishop Lowth, M'Culloch; on Jeremiah, Venema; on Ezekiel, Venema; on Hosea, Pocock; on Joel, Chandler; on Malachi, Venema; on John, Lampe; on the acts of the Apostles, Streso, Faucheur on the eleven first chapters; on the Ep. to the Romans, Carpovii stricturæ in Ep. ad Romanos; Frazer of Alness on chap. vi. and vii.; on the Galatians, Riccalton, Wesselius, Luther; on the Ephesians, Boyd; on the Colossians, Davenant, Daillee; on the epistle to the Thessalonians, Alphonsus Turretine; on the epistle to the Hebrews, Owen, Pierce, Maestrezat; on the epistle of James, Manton; on the first epistle of Peter, Leighton; on both the epistles of Peter, Langius; on the first epistle of John, Cotton, Langius; on Jude, Manton; on the Revelation, Vitranga, Mede, Lowman, bishop Newton, Johnston.

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To preach the gospel is an important duty, but not the only one; another is to visit your people in their affliction, and to converse with them as often as you find opportunity. Our Lord went about continually doing good, and taught his disciples not only in public, but in private; and the apostles taught from house to house. "Pure religion is this, to visit the fatherless and widows," (but not exclusively of others) "in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world *."

I have said nothing about systematic reading: the utility, however, of making one's self master of at least one good system of theology, is sufficiently obvious, from the importance of obtaining a clear connected view of revealed truth. And, since I am in the way of recommending books, I take the liberty of mentioning the systems of F. Turretine, Pictete, and Ridgley, any one of which may be studied with advantage. But if you can procure Stapfer's *theologia polemica*, I advise you to avail yourself of the profit you may derive from it.

It is incumbent on a divine to be acquainted with the great theological controversies. On that with the Socinians and Arians, we have Bishop Bull's works; Waterland's tracts; Jones on the Trinity; Serle's *Horæ solitariae*; Hawker on the divinity of the Son and Holy Ghost; Wynperle's proof of the Godhead of Christ; Tompkin's Mediator.

On the controversy with the Arminians, Gill's cause of God and truth; Owen's display of Arminianism; Davenant on the Love of God to man, against Hoard; Chanler on the doctrines of grace; Limestone sermons; and the works of president Edwards, Witfius, and Toplady.

On the controversy with the church of Rome, the preservative against popery, in three vol. folio; Salter-hall sermons, and the sermons of Barrow, Tillotson, and Stillingfleet.

* For the direction and consolation of the afflicted, you may safely recommend to them such treatises as the following; and you yourself may reap much profit from the perusal of them, viz. Hill's sermons; Boston's crook of the lot; Crawford's dying thoughts; Shaw's welcome to the plague; Sherlock on death and judgment; Orton on eternity; Flavel's tokens for mourners; Grosvenor's mourner; Consolatory letters, published by Dr Erskine.

By

By following so great examples, and complying with such heavenly directions, you will have ample scope for the exercise of your sympathy with the afflicted and the poor; and of love to God, to the Saviour, and to your fellow-men: and these graces, with others connected with them, will be to you sources of inexhaustible pleasure.

You will thus become acquainted with the capacities, with the dispositions, the wants and characters of your people; and thereby have the best opportunities of administering reproof, instruction, and comfort, and of supplying judiciously the wants of the poor*. By this manner of conduct, you will be so far from rendering yourself contemptible, that you will be highly respected and useful; for in Christ's kingdom, he who would be great must be the minister, and he who would be first must be the servant of all his brethren, whether poor or rich. Remember always the apostolic direction, *Take heed to thyself*, as well as to thy doctrine: with the utmost care avoid every weakness and sin which you reprove in others: and whatever duty or virtue you recommend to them, shew evidently, by your own conduct, that you love and practise it. If in this manner you dispense to every one his portion of meat in due season, how happy shall you be, if your Lord, when he cometh, shall find you so doing!

And now, my dear Son, if God shall enable you to follow these directions, and practise these duties, it will give me much more pleasure, than if, without devotion, you should be promoted to the highest

* See Dr Charters on alms.

est rank in society, or acquire millions of gold and silver. My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." My earnest prayer to God shall always be for your success and happiness.

I remain,

My Dear Son,

Your most affectionate Father,

A FATHER TO HIS SON.

My dear son, I have been thinking of you very much lately, and of the many ways in which you have been growing up. I hope you are well and happy, and that you are following the path of duty and honor. I am proud of you, and I am sure that you will make a good man of yourself. I am always with you, and I am always for you, in all your trials and temptations.



Art. Thou a Minister of the Gospel?

Thy employment is high, An Ambassador,
& that, not from some petty Prince, but from
the great God to his rebellious subjects, a calling
so honourable that the Son of God, disdained not
to come in extraordinary, from heaven to perform it;
Yea, he had to this day stayed on earth in person
about it had he not been called to reside as our am-
bassador & advocate in heaven wth the Father, & therefore
in his bodily absence he hath entrusted thee & a few
more to carry on the treaty wth sinners, which when on
earth himself began. — And what can you do more
acceptable to him than to be faithful to him in it, as a
business on which he hath set his heart & soul?
If ever then you could see his sweet face with joy, at-
tend to his words, & labour to bring this treaty of
peace to a blessed issue between God & those who
are sent to. And thus, if sinners shall not come off,
you shall as Abraham said to his servants be clear of
your oath. His grace be not gathered yet you shall
be glorious in the eyes of your Lord. —

Gurnall Vol. I
Page 140.
et 199. —

